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THE
RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

*STUDIES ON THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER
OF FIRST CORINTHIANS*

WITH
AN APPENDIX ON THE SCRIPTURE TEACHING REGARDING
THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

BY THE LATE
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“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must
put on immortality.”

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This Work,
STUDIES ON THE
RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD,

BY OUR FATHER,

IS

DEDICATED TO THE PARISHIONERS OF
GARELOCHHEAD,

BY

HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS.

“The memory of the just is blessed.”

GLENALD, 1893.

PREFACE.

THE great importance of the subject, and the feeling he has that the prevalent notions on the subject of the Resurrection of the Dead are neither in themselves credible, nor in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, lead the author to desire the publication of this book.

The Appendix, nearly as long as the preceding part of the book, is added, partly in defence of the teaching already stated, but chiefly on its own account, for the importance of the things which are involved in what is set forth in it.

The author is one of those who think that the teachings of our Lord and His Apostles are often in our day very much obscured to us by the preconceived notions which we put into them, and by which we interpret them to ourselves. His object in this whole book will be accomplished if any receive any new light from it on the subjects spoken of.

The quotations from the New Testament are given from the Revised Version.

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THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

I.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD MEANS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT NOT THE RESURRECTION OF OUR PRESENT BODIES, BUT THE RESURRECTION OF MEN OUT OF DEATH. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST THE REVELATION TO US THAT ALL MEN RISE OUT OF DEATH INTO AN AFTER LIFE.

“Now if Christ is preached that He hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”—1 COR. xv. 12-22.

WHAT is meant in the New Testament by the resurrection of the dead? The question to most people will seem a superfluous one. Of course, they will say,

what is meant is the resurrection of the body that is laid in the grave. This is, we believe, the idea of the resurrection of the dead which in every age has most largely prevailed amongst Christians; and although the resurrection of the body that is laid in the grave is to many incredible and impossible, it is the idea which most largely prevails with us. This idea of the resurrection of the dead is supposed to be taught in the discourse of this chapter, which is the greatest discourse, indeed the only great discourse, on the subject in the New Testament.

It is commonly supposed by those who try to explain the teaching of the chapter, and in most interpretations of the chapter it is assumed as a matter of course, that what the Apostle is arguing for is the resurrection of the body that is laid in the grave. He is supposed to be arguing with people who did not deny that men rise out of death into an after life, that there is an after life for men beyond the present, but who denied only the resurrection of the body laid in the grave. And it is taken for granted that throughout the chapter by the resurrection of the dead he means the resurrection of the dead body. On this supposition it is, it seems to us, quite impossible to understand the Apostle's argument, or to put any rational meaning on the successive parts of his discourse. His discourse, to an unprejudiced reader, has, we think, no appearance at all of being an argument for the resurrection of the body laid in the grave.

The Apostle does indeed teach a bodily resurrection, and his teaching on this subject is the most wonderful thing in the chapter; but he teaches this merely as a thing connected with the subject of his discourse,

which he speaks of simply in answer to a difficulty which he supposes some one among his readers would suggest. The subject of his discourse is apparently something quite different.

To us it seems plain, and quite beyond question, that he is arguing with men in the church at Corinth who said that there is no resurrection of the dead, in the sense simply that there is no resurrection out of death; who denied, that is, that there is any rising out of death for men, that there is any life beyond the present; who regarded death still, as they had been accustomed to do when they were heathens, as the end of man's existence.

We apprehend that the discourse, from beginning to end, bears this on the face of it; and that the resurrection of the dead spoken of, in the understanding both of the Apostle and of those to whom he is speaking, is simply men rising out of death into an after life.

What the Apostle is seeking to establish by the argument of his discourse, it appears plain to us, is that men rise out of death into an after life, and not at all the resurrection of the body that is laid in the grave. He does not speak at all of the body in which they rise throughout the argumentative part of his discourse, but speaks of this only after his argument is finished, and in answer to the suggested difficulties, "How are the dead raised? And with what manner of body do they come?"

And he clearly implies in his discourse that the thing denied by those who said that there is no resurrection of the dead was that there is any other life beyond the present. He says, for instance, in the

course of his argument, at verse 19th, "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." This implies surely that the thing denied by those of whom he speaks was that there was any after life, and that the thing he is arguing for is that there is an after life; and would have no relevancy at all if what they denied was only the resurrection of the body. If they believed in an after and endless life for men beyond death, and denied only the resurrection of the body, they might still surely hope in Christ in regard to that life beyond death in which they believed, and the blessedness of that life might still be an object of hope to them, although it was not life in a body. He says again, at verse 32nd, "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Which surely implies that the dead not being raised, in the understanding both of the Apostle and of his readers, meant that there was no after life beyond death; and in any other meaning of the expression could not possibly have been said by the Apostle. Their dying to-morrow could be no reason for giving themselves up to sensual indulgence if there was still to be a life after death, and a life the happiness or misery of which must depend on their life here, of which it was the continuation. The resurrection of the dead which the Apostle is seeking to establish, and which those with whom he argued denied, is plainly, we apprehend, the resurrection of men out of death; and the Apostle's discourse, on the face of it, is with men who denied any future life. The realization of this is quite needful, we think, to make the discourse intelligible to us.

And this is the meaning of the resurrection of the

dead, we apprehend, not only in the discourse of this chapter but throughout the New Testament. The Sadducees are spoken of, for instance, just as those spoken of here as "they which say that there is no resurrection" (Luke xx. 27). And our Lord's argument with them shows that, both in their apprehension and in His, there being no resurrection meant simply that there was no resurrection out of death, that there was no after life beyond death. His argument is, "that the dead are raised, even Moses showed in (the place concerning) the Bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him" (Luke xx. 37, 38). Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, that is to say, are spoken of by Moses in his day as still living. That Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were spoken of in Moses' day as still living, or that all men who have died are still living, could be no proof of the resurrection of the body that is laid in the grave. But it was a proof that there is an after life for men. There is no passage in the New Testament, we apprehend, in which the expression, the resurrection of the dead, is used in any other meaning.

But were there Christians at Corinth, it may be asked, who did not believe in a future life? It may well seem to us strange, and at first hardly credible, that there should be; but in reality it is neither incredible nor unlikely. Such Christians do not exist anywhere now, can hardly be thought of now, when to a large extent, through the influence of the Christian revelation of it, a future life is believed in by almost all men, by all Christians at least, and by men

generally even when they are not Christians. But it is in no way strange that there should have been such Christians in that day at Corinth or elsewhere. The Christians at Corinth were, no doubt, to a large extent, Gentiles, who until recently had been heathens. And in a city where St. Paul had preached Christ for eighteen months, and such a city as Corinth, which was one of the centres of Greek learning, the great centre of Greek commerce, and a place to which the higher class of Greeks resorted from all quarters, there were doubtless some among the Christians, probably not an inconsiderable number, who were men of education, and of the mental culture of the day. Now in the Greek world of that day, we are to realise, amidst all the learning and the various mental culture that were in it, and in the world indeed of the Roman Empire generally amongst the educated class, there was no real belief in any life beyond the present, or rather the belief of a future life was altogether rejected. The Jews, so far as they were not Sadducees, believed in a future life. And the belief in an after existence, in which men were to be rewarded or punished according to their life here, formed a part still of the popular religion of the nations. But the educated classes, who had come to look on the popular religion of the day, that is, on the whole system of the heathen gods, as a mere dream of poetry, had lost all real belief in an after life. It seemed to them a belief for which there was no evidence whatever.

This appears in the records of the time in a way quite startling to us. About sixty years before Christ a remarkable debate took place in the Roman Senate.

A great conspiracy against the State had just been discovered, the chief actors in it had been seized, and the question debated was the punishment which should be inflicted upon them. It was proposed that they should be put to death; but the proposal was resisted by one who was hardly less eminent as an orator and a statesman than as a great soldier—by Julius Cæsar. He dwelt on the deeds of the conspirators as crimes for which no suffering to which they could be put would be an adequate punishment, but represented death as the escape from all suffering, and therefore not a proper punishment for such criminals. His words, as they are reported to us, were these: “In pain and misery death is the release from all suffering, not suffering itself; death dissolves all the ills of mortality; beyond it is no place either for pain or pleasure. Wherefore, keep these criminals alive, to suffer a fitting penalty; after death there is no more punishment for sin, neither is there any reward for virtue.”

The sentiments were not those of the speaker only. The Roman Senate contained in it, on that memorable occasion, the most eminent men of the time, philosophers, statesmen, warriors, patriots, and leaders of the people of every kind: it comprehended also the pontiffs, and most of the ecclesiastical officers of Rome. And the speeches on the occasion of several of the most eminent men, the speech amongst others of Cicero, the greatest advocate and orator of the day, and that of Cato, the most righteous and most spiritually-minded man among the heathen of that degenerate age, are reported to us by Sallust, no mean contemporary authority.

All the speakers take notice of Cæsar’s dissertation on life and death, and his view of what death brings

to men ; and the remarkable thing is that none of them intimates any dissent from it. It was the sentiment of the age, among all men of any mental culture, with all above the lowest class of the people.¹

It is not wonderful that amongst those Christians of the first age, who had been brought up amidst this state of feeling, there should be some who, even when they believed in Christ, failed for a time, and while as yet they were imperfectly instructed, to grasp the great truth of an after life for men, who still lived in the feeling which was in all men around them, and which they had had from their childhood ; that there should be amongst the Christians some who still continued to think and say that there is no rising out of death. It is only what was natural that there should be. Except on the one great evidence of it, when that has been realised and apprehended by us, the truth that there is a future life is not one that is learned at once by those who have before disbelieved in it : and that great evidence of it, it is plain from this discourse, had not yet been realised by them. We have ourselves learned it because we have been taught it from our infancy, and because of the feeling of it that in our day is in all men around us, which has awakened within us the instinctive sense of immortality that is latent in us. But with the early Christians of the text the feeling in those around them was all the other way. It is to Christians in the Church of Corinth, we apprehend, who were in this state of unbelief in regard to a future life that the argument, and the whole impressive discourse, of this chapter are addressed.

¹ See this story more fully told in Merivale's Boyle Lectures on the Conversion of the Roman Empire, Lecture First.

The Apostle's argument for the resurrection of men out of death into an after life is an argument taken from the resurrection of Christ, the great fact in the gospel of Christ in the power of which the gospel had been received by his readers. He begins his discourse, in the opening passage of this chapter, by declaring to the Corinthian Christians the gospel he had preached to them, which also, he says, they had received, and wherein they stood; by which also they were saved, if they held it fast, except they had believed without cause. He had delivered to them first of all, he says, that which also he received—that is, that which he was divinely commissioned to preach—how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He had been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; after that, that He appeared to more than five hundred of the brethren at once, of whom the greater part were still living; then that He appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one born out of due time, that He appeared to him also. This was what he preached to them, and what they believed.

“Now if Christ is preached,” he says, “that He hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” This contains in it the Apostle's argument. It is simply absurd in a Christian to say that there is no resurrection of the dead. For the resurrection of Christ is in itself the proof that men rise out of death; it is the revelation to us of the resurrection of all men. If there were Christians with us who did not believe in an after life for men, we might perhaps reason with

them on quite a different ground, and therefore in a different fashion. We might say that the very purpose of Christ's mission, the object of His great self-sacrifice, which was to give eternal life—the life which is in God—to men, rests on the truth that there is an immortal spirit in man, a principle of life in him that survives death; and that Christ in many ways expressly teaches that there is for all men a life that comes after death, that His teaching also everywhere implies and supposes an after life for all men. We might rest the doctrine, that is to say, on the authority of Christ. And no doubt the argument is quite unanswerable, and would to every Christian be perfectly valid. But the ground on which the Apostle here rests the doctrine is a higher ground than this. The resurrection of Christ is something more than the teaching of Christ, or of any one whose teaching is authoritative, that there is an after life for men. It is the revelation to us that there is an after life for men: it shows us that men rise out of death into an after life. And since it was God that raised up Christ from the dead, it is a revelation made to us by God that there is an after life for men. To rest the doctrine on the resurrection of Christ, moreover, is to rest it, not on authority, but on a matter of fact in which every Christian believes; and to rest it on the great fact in the gospel of Christ in the power of which it is received by us. The resurrection of Christ did not indeed take place for the purpose simply of revealing a future life to us. And this is not even its primary lesson to us. It took place necessarily; and it has a higher meaning in it than this. Christ was the Son of God, in whom the Father was; and He was a man in whom was no

sin. His rising out of death, therefore, in the way He did, His rising out of the grave in which His body was laid, in His human body transfigured simply into the body of His glory, was a thing which took place naturally. God did not give His Holy One to see corruption. His resurrection from the dead was God declaring Him to men to be the Son of God. And the gospel of Christ is preached to us in the power of His resurrection ; as that in which all men may see Him to be the Son of God, and in the realisation of which therefore all men are called to believe in Him. But His resurrection is, at the same time, the revelation to us that all men rise out of death into an after life. And it is on the revelation of a future life for men which has been made to us in His resurrection that the Apostle rests the proof of a future life, of the resurrection of all men out of death.

The argument of the Apostle, which may be said to be contained in the verses we have read, is taken simply from the fact of the resurrection of Christ, in which, as Christians, his readers believed. The resurrection of Christ is the revelation to us that there is a resurrection out of death for men ; it contains in it, and is the revelation to us, that man rises out of death. What the Apostle says in the first of the verses we have read is equivalent to saying, " How could Christ rise from the dead, if there be not a resurrection out of death for men ? " His resurrection, he holds, contains in it the revelation that all men rise out of death into an after life. And, in the verses before us, he sets forth this to his Christian readers in two ways. First, by telling them what is necessarily implied in regard to Christ and Christianity, if there be

no resurrection of the dead ; and, secondly, by telling them what is implied and contained in the resurrection of Christ.

I. What is necessarily implied, in regard to Christ and Christianity, if there be no resurrection of the dead. And here, it is to be observed, his language is the language plainly of indignation and of scorn, as well as of wonder, while he draws the picture of what their unbelief in a future life presents to them as Christians. He expresses himself in brief and rapid phrases, as one does who is intensely moved, without staying to enlarge on the things said, or even to explain them, not caring to express them in fuller words. And, in speaking of what was implied in what they supposed, he uses strong language, both in regard to himself and to them ; ending with a cry of sorrow over both himself and them, if what they supposed were true.

First, in that case Christ is not risen. "But if there is no resurrection of the dead," he says, "neither hath Christ been raised." The argument implied is of the simplest kind. Christ was a man ; and Christ, as you believe, rose from the dead. But if Christ was a man, He could not rise from the dead, if there be not that in man which survives death. If death be the end of man's life, the resurrection of a man out of death is impossible. Unless there be that in man which survives death, Christ cannot have been raised ; it is simply impossible He should. If the dead do not rise out of death into an after life, neither hath Christ been raised. Then, if Christ is not risen, Christianity is a delusion ; and they, the apostles, were false witnesses of God. "And if Christ hath not been raised,

then is our preaching vain (or void), your faith also is vain (or void). Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." The salvation from their sins which they apprehended to have come to them through their faith in Christ was, in that case, a mere self-delusion. They were yet in their sins. Then, he says further, they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have, in that case, perished; that is, they have died in their sins. If in this life only, he concludes by exclaiming, we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.

This was the picture of what was presented to them, of what was necessarily implied, if what they supposed was true.

II. But Christ, he says, has been raised from the dead as he preached, and as they believed; and he tells them, secondly, what is implied and contained in the resurrection of Christ.

Here the other side of the picture, or rather a different picture, is presented; and the language of the Apostle is that of exultation and of joy. "But now," he says, "hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep." The firstfruits was the first sheaf of the harvest, which was presented to God as representing the harvest. It implied and showed the existence of the harvest of which it was the representation. And Christ, in His resurrection from the dead, is become the firstfruits of them that are asleep. He is the firstfruits presented to us of

the harvest, which implies the existence of the harvest. His resurrection is the revelation to us that all who, to our view, are asleep in death have already risen out of death into an after life. "For," he explains, "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." As death came by Adam, that is, was first manifested in him, as a thing belonging to our human life, so also the resurrection of the dead came by Christ, was first manifested in Christ, that is, as a thing belonging to our human life. It is a thing, as death is, belonging to our human nature, which only in a man could be manifested.

The conclusion, the truth which has been revealed, is, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." As Adam, our first father, died, and, therefore, in their connection with him, all his descendants, that is, all men, die, so also, in a higher manifestation of our human nature, Christ has been raised from the dead, and therefore, in their participation in that human nature in which He died and rose again, all men shall be made alive.

With this, the argument of the discourse for an after life, strictly speaking, ends. This is the revelation of an after life for men which is made to us in the resurrection of Christ. The meaning of the revelation is, that out of death all men shall be made alive.

It is a revelation of our immortality which with every enlightened Christian has become a part of his life. Christ has risen out of death, and therefore the Christian believes in an immortal existence as lying before all men. It is that by which, in the life to which we have come in Christ, Christ has to us abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to

light through the Gospel. We Christians have been begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to the hope of the eternal life, to which in the beginning of it we have come, being ours for ever; to "an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Therefore when death comes to him, the Christian knows that this is not the end, but only the entrance upon a higher life for him which lies beyond. He rejoices in Christ in his life here with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. He has a great hope sustaining him in his death. And even in the thought of the grave, through which Christ has passed into His higher life, there is for him hope.

"Prisoner of hope thou art—look up and sing
In hope of promised spring.
As in the pit his father's darling lay
Beside the desert way,
And knew not how, but knew his God would save
Even from that living grave;
So, buried with our Lord, we'll close our eyes
To the decaying world, till angels bid us rise."

II.

THEY THAT ARE SAVED BY CHRIST RISE INTO AN AFTER LIFE
AT CHRIST'S COMING—THAT IS, AT DEATH; AND THEN
COMETH THE FINAL STATE OF THINGS TO THEM.

“But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at His coming (Gr. presence). Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.”—I COR. xv. 23-28.

THE Apostle has completed his argument for the resurrection of the dead. He has shown, from the revelation of an after life which is in the resurrection of Christ, that man rises out of death into an after life; that, out of death, all men shall be made alive. And he goes on now to apply what has been said to those Christians at Corinth, to whom specially he is speaking in this discourse, and to Christians in general. It is of the resurrection of the dead as it regards “them that are Christ's,” that is, those who have come here to the salvation which is in Christ, that he speaks immediately, although not always exclusively, in all that remains of his discourse.

He has said, in the last clause of the preceding verse, that out of death all men shall be made alive—that is, shall appear again alive; and to this he adds now, “But each in his own order.” The expression is not at first sight easily intelligible, but the meaning is, we think, suggested by what follows; and, as we understand the expression, the meaning is that each one is made alive, that is, appears again alive, in the order or troop of men to which he belongs spiritually. The Apostle is stating a general principle in regard to the circumstances in which men rise out of death into an after life. Men belong spiritually to different orders, to different “troops” of men, of which “they that are Christ’s” form one; and every man shall be made alive, shall appear again alive, in the spiritual world into which all pass at death, in the circumstances which belong to the order or troop of men in which he is. The principle is stated simply to apply it to “them that are Christ’s,” the only order or troop of men of which he speaks to his readers: “Christ,” he says, “the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s at His coming.”

The expression, “But each in his own order,” is sometimes explained in our day as if it meant that men are raised from the dead in different orders or troops, each troop being raised together, and each at a different time. Then what follows is supposed to speak of the different troops referred to. Christ Himself, we are told, forms the *first* troop. The *second* troop, “they that are Christ’s,” are raised together at His coming, which is supposed to be an event that is to take place at the end of this world. And a *third* troop is made out by asserting that the expres-

sion which follows, "Then cometh the end," means the resurrection of the rest of the dead, this being held to be involved in the coming of Christ spoken of.¹

This wonderful exposition, which is obviously set forth to sustain a foregone conclusion, is surely, to say the least of it, forced and unnatural, and gives a meaning which no reader could possibly gather from the words.

The resurrection the Apostle is speaking of in the passage is plainly that of individual men, "each one;" and what he says is that each one shall be made alive, or appear again alive, "in his own order." This does not at all necessarily imply, and it is not said here, that each order of men rise from the dead together. Then, Christ Himself, to all common sense, is not an order of men, and it is not said here that He is. And only one "order" of men, "they that are Christ's," is here specifically spoken of. The *third* "order" of men supposed to be indicated, "the rest of the dead," is a purely imaginary indication. And there are previous objections to the exposition, which make it entirely inadmissible. It is founded on the idea that "the resurrection of the dead" means the resurrection of the dead body, which we have already shown is not what is meant by the expression in this discourse, or anywhere else in the New Testament. It assumes, again, that there are two resurrections of men, each of them that of an order or troop of men who are raised from the dead together; which may or may not be the meaning of what is said on the subject in the Book of Revelation, but is certainly not said, or in any way implied, in what is said here. And it takes for granted also that when it is said that

¹ See Dean Alford's Commentary on the passage.

“they that are Christ’s” shall be made alive, or appear again alive, “at Christ’s coming,” the coming of Christ spoken of is a coming of Christ which is to take place at the end of this world; which is very far from being evident.

We understand the expression, “but each in his own order,” to mean that every man shall be made alive, or appear again alive, in the circumstances belonging to the order or troop of men to which he belongs spiritually. And that what is said in what follows this is that “they that are Christ’s” shall appear again alive “at His coming.”

The question we are to ask is, What is meant here by Christ’s coming? And it is obvious to remark that it is an expression which must have been intelligible, and had a definite meaning to the Apostle’s readers, and to the early Christians in general, and must refer to an event to which they looked forward; for otherwise the expression would not have been used by the Apostle as it is here, without any explanation. Most Christians with us put no definite meaning on the expression at all. They have beforehand a vague notion, simply gathered from the teaching of our day, that Christ is to come to the earth at the end of this world, and they are content to suppose that this is what is here referred to. But whether this coming of Christ to the earth at the end of this world be a thing taught us in Scripture or no, is this at all the idea of Christ’s coming again to us which the New Testament gives us? It is natural for us to ask, What was the origin of the expression? and how does St. Paul come to use it in connection with the rising out of death of “them that are Christ’s”?

Christ's coming again personally to His disciples is only once spoken of by Him in the Gospels. It is first spoken of by our Lord to His disciples in His last discourse with them, which is recorded in the 14th and two following chapters of the Gospel of St. John; in which discourse, just before He left the earth, He speaks to them of His coming again and receiving them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also; and this is the only time He spoke to them on the subject. In that last discourse of His to them, we read in the 14th chapter of St. John, that He said to His sorrowing disciples, by way of comforting them regarding His departure from them, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know the way." To this promise, we apprehend, every after mention in the New Testament of the coming again of Christ personally to His disciples, of the manifestation of Christ, or of the appearing of Christ, has reference. There is frequent mention in the New Testament of the coming of Christ in His kingdom, and many prophecies in regard to it; but that is not a coming of Christ personally to men, nor is there any personal coming of Christ spoken of anywhere, except that spoken of in the promise here. What is the meaning of this great promise?

Of the promise every one, we suppose, at first sight, takes the meaning to be that He would come again, and receive His disciples to Himself—that is, to the place which, by His presence there, He had prepared for them when their life here ended—that is, when they passed, as He was now about to do, into the life of

the future world. The language of the promise itself, taken in connection with the circumstances in which it was given, naturally suggests this meaning to us. The coming again of Christ spoken of is plainly to the disciples only, not to men in general. Then it is spoken of to the disciples here plainly to comfort them regarding His departure from them, which implies surely that it was a promise which was soon to be fulfilled. And it is a coming again to the disciples at which He was to receive them to Himself, that where He was they might be also; which implies that it was to be fulfilled when they entered into the place prepared for them in the future world. The promise is not made in any connection whatever with the end of this world, and it cannot possibly mean His coming again to the earth.

This natural interpretation of the promise is confirmed by the references to it in the subsequent part of the same discourse.

Thus, at the 28th verse of the same chapter, He says to them, "Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you," where the coming unto them is plainly, as before, a coming to the disciples only, not to others. And again, in the 16th chapter, at the 16th verse, He says to them, "A little while and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me;" where the "beholding Him no more," and the "seeing Him," are plainly spoken in regard to the disciples only. It is implied again here more plainly than before, or rather it is quite distinctly said, that His coming again to them was near at hand. The first "little while" mentioned is obviously the brief time that now intervened before His death; and another

“ little while ” is spoken of as the time which should thereafter intervene till they should again see Him. In the verses, again, immediately following the passage in which this is said, and in express explanation of what He had said, to some of the disciples who did not understand it, He says, at the 20th verse of the 16th chapter, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have sorrow ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you.” Where the joy of their seeing Him again is plainly for the disciples only, not for men in general, and is to come to them, after a brief interval, in immediate connection with and to the taking away of their present sorrow. It is implied throughout the discourse, moreover, very plainly, that the disciples were to follow Him, when they passed hence to the place which He was going before to prepare for them : just as He had said to Peter a little before, “ Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow afterwards ” (John xiii. 36).

This is the “ coming (literally, ‘ presence ’) of Christ,” it seems plain to us, which is spoken of in the passage before us. It is spoken of also in very many other passages in the Epistles of the Apostles, in the New Testament. St. John, for instance, who was one of those to whom the promise was originally spoken, and who was Christ’s most intimate companion throughout

all His ministry, says in his first Epistle, "And now, my little children, abide in Him ; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (literally, presence), (1 John ii. 28). He says again in the same Epistle, "We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John iii. 2). St. Peter, who was also one of those to whom the promise was originally given, says in his first Epistle, "That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 7). And he exhorts the elders of the Church to a diligent discharge of their duties, by saying to them, "And when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 4). St. Paul, again, makes frequent references to it. In what is supposed to be the very earliest of his Epistles, the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, he says of his readers at Thessalonica, that they had "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to *wait for* His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead" (1 Thess. i. 9). And in the same Epistle he exhorts them not to sorrow concerning them that fall asleep, "even as the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thess. iv. 14).

In this first Epistle to the Corinthians, when speaking to them of the Lord's Supper, he says, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death *till He come*" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

In the Epistle to the Colossians he says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Again, in his Epistle to Titus, setting forth that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world," he adds, "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour (or of the great God and our Saviour) Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13). In his first Epistle to Timothy he says to him, "I charge thee . . . that thou keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. vi. 13). And in the second Epistle to Timothy, speaking of himself, he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8).

In all these passages, it is plain, we apprehend, that the coming, or manifestation, or appearing of Christ of which the Apostles speak, is His coming again to receive them to Himself, that they might be with Him where He is, of which He had given His first disciples the promise. And in these passages, as in the original promise, the coming again of Christ to those who were His is spoken of not only as an event which was soon to take place, but as an event which was to take place to them when their life here ended, which was to be the consummation and issue of their Christian life here. It was an event accordingly which, in this understanding of it, the early Christians, in their Chris-

tian life here, looked forward to, and waited for, and sustained themselves by the prospect of. This coming again, or appearing of Christ to His disciples, is in no way connected, in any of these passages, with the end of this world. On the contrary, it is spoken of very plainly, in several of the passages, as an event which lay before them at the end of their life here, and when they should enter into the life of the future world. When Timothy, for instance, is solemnly charged by St. Paul to fight the good fight of faith, which he had been commanded to do, "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," it is, it would seem, very plainly implied that the appearing of Christ spoken of was a thing that was to take place to Timothy when his life here ended. So, again, when it is said to the Corinthians regarding the Lord's Supper, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come," it would seem distinctly implied and taught that the coming of Christ spoken of was a thing that was to take place to them when their life here ended. The language used would otherwise be without meaning. And it is quite as certain, we apprehend, in regard to the other passages we have quoted, that the coming of Christ, or the manifestation of Christ, spoken of was a thing which was expected by the disciples to take place to them at the end of their life here. It is plainly contained in the passages we have quoted, that it was in this sense that Christ's original promise was understood by the Apostles, and in this sense that His coming again to them is everywhere spoken of by them to the early Church.¹

¹ See Appendix, On the Second Coming of Christ.

It is to be carefully observed that Scripture everywhere recognises and leads us to think, in regard to those who died in the past, that they are living now, and that they have simply passed through death into the after life; not that they will begin to live again at some future time; and this in regard to men in every past age. Enoch in very early times, and Elijah later, were translated without seeing death. We must needs believe, therefore, that they simply continued to live, and that they are now living, only in a higher state of human life than our present one. Their earthly bodies, it would seem, were simply transfigured into that body of glory in which Elijah on the Mount of the Transfiguration appeared visibly to three of the disciples of Christ. Moses, again, who died here as other men do, appeared along with Elijah "in glory" on the same great occasion. They both appeared in glory talking with Jesus, and were seen by the disciples when the eyes of the disciples were supernaturally opened to see them. Our Lord also speaks expressly of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob as still living, and of all men who have died as still living. He quotes a passage of Scripture in which Moses calls God the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and adds in regard to it, that God is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all men, He says, are living to Him—that is, as things are seen by Him. And this is the proof, moreover, which He gives the Sadducees, to whom He is speaking, that according to the teaching of Moses the dead are raised out of death.

And St. Paul himself, again, who wrote this discourse, certainly expected to see Christ and to be with Him immediately after death. He tells the Philippians

that he has "the desire to depart and to be with Christ; for," he says, "it is very far better" (Phil. i. 23.) And says to the Corinthians in his second Epistle, expressly in his apprehension of what death would bring to him and to the disciples of Christ, that to be "absent from the body" is to be "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 6). "Knowing," he says, "that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are of good courage, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord."

The "coming again," the "manifestation," or the "appearing," of Christ to us means simply that He is now in heaven, in that place in His Father's house to which He went when He left the earth, to prepare it for us, by His presence in it; and that we, when we pass hence, shall enter into the place in the spiritual world where He is. They that are Christ's, the Apostle tells us here, shall be "made alive," that is, shall appear again alive, "at His coming."

He goes on to speak of the final state of things to us which then comes to us. "Then," he says, "cometh the end." Not the end of this world, of which nothing has been said, but simply the end to us which things here are to bring to us, or the final state of things to us. This end or final state of things which things here are to bring to us, is the end in this sense, the Apostle explains, that then all that Christ was to do for men, as the Saviour of the world, shall, in regard to us, have been accomplished.

It is, to them that are Christ's, the end of things here; "when He shall deliver up the kingdom" over them "to God, even the Father; when He shall have

abolished all rule and all authority and power ;” that is, all rule and all authority and power over them, other than that of God. “ For He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.” “ For,” says the Apostle, quoting the 8th Psalm, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews also does, as having its fulfilment in Christ, “ He,” that is, God, “ put all things in subjection under His feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.”

The last sentence expresses the characteristic of the final state of things with us. When Christ shall have abolished death, in regard to us, by raising us up out of death into that after life in which we are with Christ, His destruction of the works of the devil here will, as regards us, be complete, and His work of salvation, as it regards us, will be fully accomplished. His kingdom over us here will therefore now be delivered up to God, that is, to the Father, because the purpose of it has been fully accomplished.

It is not implied, in what the Apostle thus teaches us, that when we have gone to be where He now is, Christ will cease to rule over us. Doubtless Christ continues there, in subordination to the Father, to rule over us. Where God reigns Christ must reign. God reigns there as He reigns everywhere, through Christ, who is the expression of God. Only Christ’s work in the kingdom over men given Him here has been

accomplished, and therefore God is now all in all. The kingdom of God here has come to us in its glory.

If we have rightly apprehended the teaching of this part of the Apostle's discourse, there are two things taught us in it: First, that "they that are Christ's," they that are saved by Christ, rise into the after life at His coming, that is, at death; and secondly, that then cometh the final state of things to us, the perfected state of our life which shall be for ever. The text, therefore, sets before us, if we are living Christians, a prospect of infinite greatness; and it is to be specially impressed on us as a prospect that is very near to us, a prospect which, in regard to us individually, will very soon be fulfilled. It is the prospect which especially casts a glory over the Christian life in us here, irradiating it with the rainbow of hope—with the living hope to which we have been begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This prospect which they had before them is, we apprehend what accounts for the extraordinary state of mind of the early Christians, in which, living their daily lives in a continual waiting for Christ's coming again to them, they were raised into an indifference to all earthly possessions, and into an indifference also to the sufferings which their Christianity brought to them. And there is no reason, although sobriety of mind is always befitting in us, why in a right mind, a right spirit of life in us, the prospect should be less engrossing or less elevating to us.

The greatness of the prospect, and especially the nearness of it, should make us sit loose to things here, that are merely of this world; to earthly possessions, and to the earthly sufferings which a Christian life

here brings to us. When a brief time has passed, we know not how brief it may be, if we are indeed the children of Christ's kingdom here, we shall be with Christ, and in the kingdom of God in the glory of it. The prospect should especially impress on us the duty of living our life here, day by day, as the children of light and of the day. The lesson it reads to us is that which this same Apostle elsewhere expresses, that we should live in the love to men to which in Christ we are called, as "knowing the season, that now it is high time for us to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii. 11). It is for us therefore to "cast off the works of darkness, and to put on *the armour of light.*" It becometh us to "walk honestly, as in the day;" "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." It is true indeed of every Christian who has the spirit of Christ in him, and is walking in that spirit, that, in the spiritual condition to which by God's grace he has come, God has made him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But it is also true that the measure of our fitness for entering into the everlasting kingdom which is so near to us is the measure just in which we are walking in the spirit which we have received, in the trial of our faith to which in our daily life here we are put. And therefore it is good for us, in all our daily life here, to live under the power of the prospect that lies before us. In the language of our Lord's parable, the Lord whom we serve, going into another country, has delivered to us His goods, to each according to his several ability, that we may gain by trading with them. He will return to us at a time

when we think not ; and when He comes He will reward us according to our faithfulness in using His goods intrusted to us, according to the profit spiritually which we have thereby made. Our place in the everlasting kingdom will depend on our faithfulness to Him in the trial to which in our life here we have been put. It befits us, therefore, to realise the uncertainty of the time of His coming, and to be prepared for His coming by being at all times faithful to Him in the work which He has given us to do.

Let me observe finally, that in a right spirit of life in us, the great prospect which is so near to us should be to us a prospect of joy, and that there is no limit to the joy which it may naturally and properly give us.

It is related by a great preacher of our own day of a clergyman of the Church of England, that when his death approached, he was in such ecstatic joy at the thought of entering into the life of God's kingdom in its glory, that the physician declared that, in the state of mind in which he was, he *could* not die.

Such extravagant joy in the great prospect before us, however natural it may be at any time, is as undesirable as it is rare. We should at all times be sober-minded. But joy in that prospect, in the more moderate form in which St. Paul expressed it, is certainly a state of mind which is desirable, as well as natural and befitting in us ; the state of mind in which we can say, "I have the desire to depart and be with Christ ; for it is very far better" (Phil. i. 23) ; "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (ver. 21).

And our joy in the great prospect before us, along with the sense of duty which belongs to our high calling in Christ, should incite us to "walk worthily

of God, who calleth us into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. ii. 12). It should incite us to be occupied in Christ's service in our daily life, as they that wait for the coming of their Lord.

Like the wise virgins in the parable, who had gone forth to meet the Bridegroom, and were waiting for His coming, we should be waiting with our lamps trimmed and our lights burning, that when He comes, come when He may, we may be ready to go in with Him to the marriage.

"Thy precious time misspent redeem :
Each present day thy last esteem :
Improve thy talent with due care :
For the great day thyself prepare."

III.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD A CHRISTIAN TRUTH, RECOGNISED BY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND THAT BY WHICH THE APOSTLES IN THEIR WORK, AND CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CHRISTIAN LIFE, WERE SUSTAINED—THE CAUSE OF THE UNBELIEF OF IT OF SOME OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS, AND THE REMEDY FOR THEIR UNBELIEF.

“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived: Evil company doth corrupt good manners. Awake up righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God: I speak this to move you to shame.”—1 COR. xv. 29-34.

THE Apostle has set forth to the Christians at Corinth who did not believe in a future life that the resurrection of all men out of death was revealed to us in the resurrection of Christ, in which, as Christians, they believed; and has taught them, moreover, that men appear again alive in the spiritual world into which we pass at death, each one in his own order or troop, and they that are Christ's at His coming the great prospect in the future to which they have been taught to look forward.

But the resurrection of the dead was a Christian truth, recognised as such by the Christian Church, and a truth by which specially their Christian life was sustained. It is natural, therefore, now that he has completed his argument on the subject, that he should speak to them of the resurrection of the dead, and of a future life for men, as a fundamental and recognised Christian truth which no rightly instructed Christian could disbelieve; and that he should warn them of the self-deception to which they were giving themselves up, and their shortcoming of what in their right mind it befitted them to have attained to, in their unbelief in it. This is what the Apostle here does.

That the resurrection of the dead was a Christian truth, a truth belonging to the Christian revelation, which was recognised as such by the Christian Church, was implied, he asks them to observe, in a practice of a particular kind which existed in the Church. "Else," he says, "what shall they do"—what is the meaning of what they do—"which are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?" The practice of which the Apostle speaks seems a strange thing to us. The mention of it is a thing which stumbles us in reading the discourse. For we have no knowledge otherwise of this baptism for the dead, what it was, or how it came to be practised in the Apostolic Church. This is the only mention of it in the New Testament; and there is no reference, as far as we know, in the early Christian literature to such a practice as having existed in the Apostolic Church. The mention of it here, however, is perfectly distinct; and in the face

of this passage it is, we think, impossible to doubt that such a practice, whatever the purpose of it was and however it originated, did at this time exist in the primitive Church. We cannot explain the existence of it from any positive knowledge of what it was, and can add nothing to the mention of it here made. A practice of the kind, however, is spoken of as having existed in the second and third centuries among certain Christian sects of the time, of which the meaning is explained. When a heathen who was under Christian instruction, and was about to be baptized, died suddenly before his baptism could take place, they were in use, it would seem, to admit the dead person formally into the Church by baptism, a living Christian receiving the baptism in name of the dead. And it would seem to be the only possible explanation of the passage before us that a similar practice, or a practice in substance the same as this, existed also in the Apostolic Church. It is, from the nature of the case, a practice that would only be used on rare occasions, but it is in no way incredible, it seems to us, that such a practice should have existed. It is not necessarily implied that the dead person was supposed to be in any way benefited by the baptism. In that case, it would be an abject superstition, which it is impossible to believe could be countenanced by the Apostles. It might be used simply to mark the dead person as one who was really within the Christian Church, and whom they recognised as a Christian. In the wide prevalence of the Christian Church now, such a practice seems strange to us; and if it were adopted in our day by the teachers of Christianity in a heathen country

it would probably be thought by us an absurd thing. But it is not obvious that in that day, to the Christian feeling of the time, there was anything absurd in it, or that in the early Church the practice might not very naturally exist. But whatever may have been the justification of this baptism for the dead in the primitive Church, the only thing here stated is the fact of the existence of the practice. And the Apostle's argument, it would seem, is, that the existence of the practice showed that, among Christians in general, it was recognised as a certain truth that those who had died had also been raised out of death and were still living; otherwise there was no meaning in their being baptized for the dead. If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

We are not perhaps bound to believe, on that account simply, everything that the Church in general believes. The Apostle does not say that we are; but if we cleave still, as the disciples here addressed did, to a notion we had in our ignorance of Christianity, which is opposed to all Christian teaching and all recognised Christian belief, we are bound to face the fact that it is in opposition to what the Church in general believes to be contained in the revelation of the Gospel, and bound therefore to consider carefully the grounds on which, in the matter, the belief of the Church rests.

The Apostle addresses this strong remonstrance to them in the name of the Church of Christ, and he adds another for himself. The work in which he was occupied, and the sufferings he endured as an Apostle of Christ, were altogether without object if the dead

are not raised. "Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

He, in his preaching of Christ, was every hour in danger of death. He protests to them, by the glorying in them which he had in Christ, that he died daily. Why did he do so, if men are not raised out of death? If, after the manner of the time, he had fought with beasts at Ephesus—referring apparently to the tumult at Ephesus described in the 19th chapter of Acts—what was he profited by this conflict with the men of the time? If the dead are not raised, it would be better to follow the maxim of their heathen poet, and to live only for present enjoyment in life. "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Having made these remonstrances with them regarding the fundamental Christian truth which they denied, the Apostle follows up the argument of his discourse by setting forth to those whom he addresses the cause of their unbelief, and teaching them the remedy for it.

First, he sets forth to them the cause of their unbelief. They were deceived, he tells them, by the influence on them of the heathen world in which they lived, quoting to them, in saying so, a saying of one of their own heathen poets: "Be not deceived; evil company doth corrupt good manners."

They were deceived by the influence on them of

the heathen world around them. A future life is revealed to us in the resurrection of Christ, and made certain to us thereby, and the fact that there is a future life for men is what gives meaning to the great hope of the Christian, to the promise which Christ left to His disciples that He would come again and receive them to Himself, in the place to which He was going, that they might be where He was. The doctrine of a future life is of the essence of Christianity, and must needs be believed in by every one who was intelligently a Christian. But the state of feeling in the heathen world of the day was against the belief of the doctrine. It was not easy for an educated and intelligent disciple of Christ to rise at once above the state of feeling in regard to a future life in which he had been brought up, and which was in all men around them; and the Christians at Corinth here addressed, in the spiritual condition in which they were, had not yet done so. Mingling in the Greek world of the day in their daily life, the world whose sentiments were expressed in the literature of the time, and in the habits of feeling of all the educated class, imbued from their childhood with its sentiments and feelings, and not yet enlightened as they should be by their faith in Christ, the evil influence in this respect of the society in which they lived was still upon them. This was the reason of their unbelief. They were deceived by the influence upon them of the heathen world in which they lived. It was not necessary that it should be so with Christians in the circumstances of those here addressed. If they had come, through their faith in Christ, to have the spirit of life in them to which in Christ they were called, and were

living their life here in that spirit, then it was natural, and indeed inevitable, with this life in them, that, in the light which the gospel of Christ brought to them, a life beyond death should be realised by them, and that they should be raised into the expectation of it. They might have had "life and immortality" at once "brought to light" to them, and might have been raised at once above the evil influence of the world around them. And so it was with many Christians in the circumstances of those here addressed. But it was not easy to rise above the influence in this matter of the world around them; and in the first steps of their Christian life, while they were as yet not fully enlightened by their faith, there was danger of Christians not rising above the feeling of the cultured society of the time. The Christians at Corinth, to whom this discourse is addressed, in the spiritual condition in which they were, were still in regard to a future life under the influence of the world around them, and had not escaped from the unbelief on the subject of the society in which they mingled. They were deceived by the evil influence on them of the heathen world around them.

The Apostle sets forth, secondly, the remedy for their unbelief. The remedy which he suggests is a spiritual one—their awaking spiritually, and putting on the life in righteousness to which in Christ they were called: "Awake up righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God: I speak this to move you to shame."

"Awake up righteously, and sin not"—that is, awake to the life in righteousness to which Christ has called you, and put sin away from you. This

was the remedy for their unbelief in a future life. "For some," he adds, "have no knowledge of God"—that is, some Christians have not come to the true knowledge of God which is given to us in Christ, the knowledge of God out of which it is that life in righteousness is put within us. He spoke this, he says, to move them to shame.

The life in them to which they were redeemed in Christ—the life which is in the righteousness of God, and in which we put sin away from us—the life which comes to us out of the knowledge of God which is in Christ—this was the remedy for their unbelief. When they awoke spiritually, and had this, the life to which they were called, in them, then, in the light of the Gospel of Christ, they would realise a life for men beyond death. Then the idea that human life ends in death would be incredible to them. Then, in the eternal life to which they had come, they would have the sense of immortality awakened in them, and would instinctively rise into the apprehension, and into the joyful expectation, of a life for us beyond death which Christ has brought to light to us. This does not invalidate the external evidence for a future life which is in the revelation of it in the resurrection of Christ, or lessen the importance for us of that revelation. A future life must be revealed to us before the fact of it can, in any distinct way, be realised by us; and the argument for a future life, which is in the revelation of it in the resurrection of Christ to every one who believes in His resurrection, is quite unanswerable. But we do not therefore realise the fact of it; and the life in the righteousness of God, the eternal life which Christ gives us, when we have come to have

it in us, is what enables the Christian to realise a future life. The eternal life in us has its witness in itself, and makes unbelief in a future life impossible to us.

It is this life in righteousness in us, this eternal life which Christ gives us, and only this still, that raises any of us into the realisation of a future life. Nobody now-a-days in the Christian Church, and hardly anybody in Christian lands beyond it, denies the resurrection of the dead, says that there is no resurrection of men out of death. Nobody, that is, disbelieves in a future life. We believe in it because we are Christians, and because the doctrine of a future life is in our day universally received among Christians forms a part of our ancestral faith. Perhaps many, or most of us, could not very distinctly tell on what grounds our belief in it rests, but we quite believe in it. The fact is, that the resurrection of Christ has impressed this truth on the mind of the Christian Church, and made it with us, as it were, one of the first principles of Christianity. It has transferred it with us from the region of speculation, in which it was in the old heathen world, to the region of ascertained truth. And we believe in it easily very much because all men with us believe in it. But we do not most of us for ourselves realise a future life; and the reason is that we have not, most of us, consciously risen, through our faith in Christ, or that to which we give the name of faith in Christ, into the life in the righteousness of God in which we put sin away from us, into the eternal life to which in Christ we are called, which has in it an inward premonition of the life to come.

Live your life as the heathen of old for the most part did, and as very many Christians so called still do, apart from the knowledge of God which has come to you, and therefore in habitual forgetfulness of God, occupied only with the outward things of this life, and intent only on earthly possessions or earthly enjoyments; the merely animal nature in you fully alive, perhaps the mental or intellectual nature in you also alive, but the spiritual nature, in which we are capable of apprehending God, dead or asleep in you, and the future life, even when you believe in it, will be to you nothing more than a dream, as to the heathen of old at best it was. You may not disbelieve in its existence, as the heathen of St. Paul's day did, but it will be to you, in your daily life, very much as if it did not exist. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," that Christ may give you light. Live your life in the light of the knowledge of God, which is in Christ, and therefore in the Spirit which Christ gives us through our faith in Him. Let the life which you now live in the flesh be a life which you live by the faith of the Son of God, and therefore the life in the heavenly righteousness, in which we put sin away from us, to which Christ has called us. Let this life, which is in its very nature the eternal life, be the life to which you have come, and that there is not a life after death will be to you a thing incredible. You will at all times realise the future life which has been revealed to us, and will instinctively rise into the apprehension of it, having in you an inward assurance that this life to which you have come will never die in you. You will have in you, day by day, in the light

of Christ's promise to His first disciples, the apprehension, the expectation, the constant assurance of a blessed life beyond death ; and when you die, you will die in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection into that life.

IV.

THE BODY IN WHICH WE ARE MADE ALIVE OUT OF DEATH.

“But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual (body). So also it is written, The first Adam became a living soul. The last Adam (became) a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”—I COR. xv. 35-49.

It is difficult for us to enter into the state of mind of Christians who did not believe in a future life, and difficult therefore to understand the effect which the preceding discourse might be expected to produce on

them. But we can perhaps to some extent understand the state of mind it would create in them. It is sometimes said that an argument very rarely convinces any one to whom it is addressed; and this is true to this extent at least, that where those to whom the argument is addressed have had before an entirely opposite view on the subject, it rarely convinces any one at once. We are disposed to muster up the difficulties which the new view on the subject suggests to us, even when we are convinced that there is much in what has been said before we give in our adherence to the view of it that is presented to us. And we are disposed, in all probability, even when the new view on the subject seems the true one, to insist on the difficulties to us in it being first explained to us—a thing which, on some subjects, even to one who has the most profound belief in what he teaches, is not always easy. The Apostle, therefore, doubtless rightly interprets the state of mind of his readers here, and even of those whom his discourse most impressed, when he says, “But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?”

The two questions which he anticipates they would desire to ask are questions, both of them, which, after reading the preceding discourse, would naturally suggest themselves to Christians who had not before received the idea of a future life, difficulties to them in conceiving the idea of a future life which they would desire to have explained to them. They are both of them questions which, to the Apostle's readers, or even to men in general, it might well seem impossible to answer. The Apostle, however, does not

shrink from answering them. He takes up the second question as the more important of the two; first, "With what manner of body do they come?" And the answer he gives is contained in the verses we have read. It is a question of great natural interest to us; and if the question can be answered in regard to the rising out of death of those who are saved by Christ, which is what the Apostle is here speaking of, the answer to it cannot but contain a great revelation to us regarding our after life. The answer which the Apostle gives to the question is in itself in the utmost degree interesting and impressive. It is given with great distinctness; and as the only teaching on the subject in the New Testament, and a very wonderful teaching in itself, it is well worthy of our most thoughtful reflection.

It is to be observed at the outset, what is plainly contained in the question, that, in the way of thinking of human life of the Christians of the time, both of the Apostle's readers and of himself, if men live after death they must live in a body. His readers have plainly the idea, which the Apostle does not in any way discountenance, that a body is a thing necessarily belonging to human life. They cannot think of human life except as life in a body. We sometimes hear people speak, and we read in books, of disembodied spirits, as if men lived after death without bodies; and what is called the disembodied state is spoken of by many in our day as the state of life for men that comes after death. People fancy they can conceive of such a state of life with men, or at least that it really exists. But this idea of a disembodied state, we apprehend, is simply an imagination

of theologians ; an idea to which they have been led by the notion that the resurrection of the dead means the resurrection of the body laid in the grave, and the notion added to this that the resurrection of the dead is not to take place till the end of this world. This implies, of course, a lengthened interval betwixt death and the resurrection, during which it is thought, if men live consciously at all, they must needs live in a disembodied state. The New Testament nowhere suggests the possibility, and certainly nowhere speaks of men living in a disembodied state. Whether such a state of life is a possible thing for a man we perhaps cannot tell. But it is not a conception of human life which we naturally have, or a form of life for men of which the New Testament anywhere suggests the possibility. To human life, a body, answering to that which we have now, by which we hold communication with the outward world, and with other men around us, naturally belongs, and is, it would seem, altogether necessary.

It is to be observed also that the question which the Apostle supposes his readers to ask is not founded on the idea that the resurrection of the dead is the resurrection of the dead body, but on the idea that it is simply a resurrection of men out of death into an after life. It is a question of incredulity, suggested by those who could not conceive with what manner of body we rise out of death, when the body we have here is left to decay in the grave.

The Apostle, therefore, begins his answer to the question by setting forth to them that our rising out of death in another and a new body, of quite a different character from the present, is in no way incredible.

He tells them that, on the contrary, this is only in accordance with what was exhibited to them year by year in the natural world that is with us here. "Thou foolish one," he says to the objector, "that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened"—does not rise into its new life—"except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own." This is an example, taken from the natural world here, of what occurs with us year by year. The seed you sow in the ground does not rise in its new form of life except it die—that is, except its body, the husk in which it is invested, die. And in sowing the seed, you do not sow the body that shall be, but a bare grain: but God gives it a body, which He has provided for its taking, and gives to each of the individual seeds a body of its own. It is an illustration from the natural world around us that our rising out of death in another and a new body is in no way incredible, but, on the contrary, is according to the analogy of nature in our present life.

He sets forth further, by another illustration from the natural world with us here, the possibility of the body in which we rise out of death, although it be made of matter, being of quite a different character from that we have here. "All flesh"—the matter of which bodies here are composed—"is," he says, "not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes." That the body of our after life, therefore, although made of matter, as all bodies are,

should be of a different character, because made of matter of a different kind from the body we have here, is only according to the analogy of nature here. And to this he adds, "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." There may, therefore, be a much wider difference than that of one kind of flesh from another in this world, and a difference of which we cannot form the conception. In illustration of the greatness of the difference, he points us to the celestial glory, different in each individual case, of the objects in the material heavens with us. "There is one glory," he says, "of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory." And then he adds, "So also"—in accordance with the wide difference of the celestial from the terrestrial—"is the resurrection of the dead." And he proceeds to set forth to them the characteristics of the heavenly body as contrasted with those of the earthly.

In regard to the passage which follows, it is to be observed first, that the Apostle does not seek to give us a positive conception of the body which belongs to our after life. It can be spoken of to us, it would seem, only in so far as its characteristics, as being a celestial thing, can be contrasted with those of the body which we have here. He speaks of it simply in its contrast with the body we have here. It is the body belonging to the heavenly state of our life, and it is impossible for us to form a positive conception of it, because, in our present state of life we are unable to form the conception of the things of heaven. Even those who have been in heaven, as

St. Paul had been, and who have had their minds opened spiritually to apprehend the things that are there, cannot convey the apprehension of them which has been given to them to us. It is an apprehension which cannot be uttered in human language. He sets forth simply certain characteristics of the heavenly body by speaking of it in contrast with the body which we have here. But it is to be observed also, that what he sets forth regarding the heavenly body he states in a positive form, wishing us, it would seem, to understand that it is a knowledge regarding the body of glory which belonged to him personally. It is a knowledge, it seems to us, which he could not have reached except by having actually been in the heavenly world, as we know he was on that great occasion when he was "caught up into Paradise." But however the knowledge was attained by him, the passage, from its extraordinary character, is one which deserves the most careful reflection from us. Every word in it, it is obvious, is carefully selected, and every clause, however little we can fully apprehend its meaning, has plainly a world of meaning in it. It sets forth to us certain characteristics of the body in which we rise out of death, as contrasted with that we have here, which enable us at least to realise with some intelligence how extremely different it is from the body we have here.

First, it is an incorruptible body.

Our life is sown here in corruption. The body in which it is expressed is a corruptible body, which is subject to decay and to dissolution, which can subsist only for a limited time, and which after a time must needs be dissolved in death, and resolved into its original

elements. It is raised in incorruption. The body in which we rise out of death is an incorruptible body, a body belonging to the materialism of the celestial world, which is not subject to decay or to dissolution, which is imperishable, indestructible, immortal. The spirit which it clothes is immortal, and so also is the vesture in which then it is invested.

Then, secondly, it is the body belonging to the glory of human life.

Our life is sown here in dishonour. The body in which it is expressed is the body which belongs to the first stage of human life, and which is to be dissolved in death. It is raised in glory. The body in which we rise out of death is the body of glory—the body which belongs to the highest form of human life, to human life as it is hereafter.

Thirdly, it is a body in which the capacities which inwardly belong to us are fully developed.

Our life is sown here in weakness. The body in which it is expressed is a body in which the capacities we inwardly possess are expressed only very imperfectly, in a weak form. It furnishes us with bodily organs through which the capacities of the mind express themselves, but which give only a very inadequate expression to those capacities. The organs with which it furnishes us are quite as really, in some respects, a restraint and restriction upon the capacities as they exist within us, and are quite unequal to the full development of them. This is a fact regarding the body we presently possess of which we can for ourselves easily realise the truth. To take an obvious instance from the organs of sense, the mind has a power of sight to which the eye gives only a very

feeble and imperfect expression ; which is made evident by this, that if you add the aid of a telescope to the eye, or again of a microscope, your power of vision can be increased, or the range of vision extended indefinitely. The power of vision in the mind is, so far as we know, unlimited, and, with an organ of vision entirely corresponding with it, the range of vision might be indefinitely extended. So it is apparently with all the other organs of sense ; the power they give us, each in its several way, depends simply on the structure of our present bodies. Taking the organs of sense as a whole, so it is with the power generally that we have of apprehending the natural world around us. By the organs of sense which we possess it is confined to certain properties of natural objects, which it is needful for us to know, and is also limited in its range ; but it is only, apparently, by the organs of sense with which, in our present bodies, the mind is furnished that it is thus restricted. Beyond this, our power of movement at will from place to place, in like manner, is restricted only by our bodily structure. It is made what it is by the particular structure of our limbs, but beyond what is in the bodily framework through which it expresses itself it has, it would seem, no other restriction upon it, and might be quite indefinitely greater than it is. It is so with what may be called the physical powers of the mind ; and rising into a higher region, it is so also, to some extent, with its intellectual powers, its powers of reason or of understanding. The brain is, it would seem, in some sense, although in what sense we are unable definitely to tell, the organ of the intellect, and the powers of the intellect we can exert are made what they are by the

form or structure or by the healthy condition of the brain.

The power of memory, for instance, as we are at present constituted, is, in some sense, a function of the brain, and on the particular structure of that organ in our present body depends the strength in which we possess it, the vividness with which we retain, or the readiness with which we recall, the impressions which in any way are made on the mind. The power of memory we can exert is made what it is by the structure or the condition of the brain. In a bodily structure more perfectly corresponding with our inward powers, a memory a thousandfold more retentive—retentive even of everything in our whole past life—is, it would seem, perfectly possible to us. It is so also, it would seem, with the power of imagination, and, in some sense, with all the powers of reason or of understanding we possess, except perhaps the power of intuitive spiritual discernment, which would seem to be the highest power that is possessed by a man. In fine, the body in which we live here expresses plainly, only very imperfectly and in a feeble form, the capacities which the mind inwardly possesses. It expresses those capacities in a form simply which is fitted to the purposes of our present life. It does not at all express them as they exist inwardly in us.

But the life which is sown here in weakness is raised in power. The body in which we rise out of death is a body in which all the capacities of the mind have perfect expression given to them, and are developed in their fulness. This characteristic of the body of our after life is especially suggestive to us of the entirely new and higher character of the life into which

at death we are to enter. It is the characteristic of the resurrection body which especially helps us to understand the elevation of the life of the future world above the life we have here; and since the capacities which are afterwards to be developed are already in us, it helps us at the same time to understand its oneness in us with our present life.

Finally, what contains everything else in it, it is a spiritual body.

Our life is sown here a natural body. The body in which it is expressed is a body which is fitted to the life of this present world. It is raised a spiritual body. The body in which we rise out of death is a spiritual body, a body which the spirit takes to itself when life in the body we have here ceases, and which is fitted to the higher life of the spiritual world, or of that particular place in the spiritual world to which we pass at death.

“If there is a natural body,” the Apostle adds, “there is also a spiritual.” That is, if there is for us a body fitted to the life of this world, there is also for us a body fitted to the life of the spiritual world into which we pass at death. “So also,” he goes on to say, “it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul” (Gen. ii. 7), received the human life of this world. “The last Adam,” he subjoins, “became,” or rather is, “a life-giving spirit.” By His Spirit, which Christ puts within us here, by the Spirit in which He dwells in us, He raises us into the life of that spiritual world into which “they that are Christ’s” enter at death. This same Apostle says just the same thing in the Epistle to the Romans, when he says, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from

the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also, shall give life also to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11). And again, in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, to whom he is now writing, when he says, "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Cor. iv. 14).

"Howbeit," the Apostle adds, going on with his argument, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual." In illustration of which he adds, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy"—they that have the earthly life in them: "and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly"—they that have the heavenly life in them. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

The Apostle has thus answered the question which he supposes some one of his readers to put, "With what manner of body do they come?" He has answered the question in the imperfect form in which such a question can be answered to us here, but at the same time with great distinctness and fulness, and in language which is very wonderful. The climax and consummation of the answer is contained in the last sentence: "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." As we have had the form, the body, of him who is of the earth, we shall also have the form, the body, of Him who is of heaven. In the language of this same Apostle to the Philippians, "He shall fashion anew

the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21).

The prospect which is set before us in this great teaching, that of the bodily change that is to pass on us in our rising out of death, is a very great prospect. It is a prospect so great, and so much beyond our powers of apprehension, that we can only in a very faint way realise it. It is hidden from us in the excess of glory which belongs to it. Let it be impressed on us, however, that it is the prospect which lies before us, if we are Christ's, and have our part in Him. It is surely for us, in the utmost degree, an elevating prospect, which is fitted to raise us above things here, and, however little we can realise the life of that world to come, to make the higher state of our life, in which we are to spend eternity, the frequent subject of our thoughts. It should be to us of all subjects of thought the greatest and the most impressive. There are those whom we have known and loved here, who are now, as we believe and are assured, in that perfected estate of human life; and yet a little while, a few passing years at most, and we also, if we are Christ's, shall be in it. The thought of it should be, as it were, continually present with us. It is for us the greatest subject of thought that can occupy us here. For the Christian in his right mind, for us if we are of them that are Christ's, it is an elevating and impressive prospect, which is fitted, when we consider it, to put everything else out of our thoughts. The marvel is that we think of it so little; that while thoughts that regard our brief future here are often with us in our life, we think so little of that greater future to which we are hastening, and in comparison with which all earthly things that

can come to us are as nothing ; that we live so little under the power of that world to come. To dwell in thought, in anticipation, in hope, of that higher and enduring state of our life which is so near to us, is a thing which should often occupy us ; and the thought, the anticipation, of what it will bring to us, however little we can here realise it, should give us our deepest joy in our life here. It should give us sobriety of mind, and especially it should give us steadfastness in the Christian life, in which this hope is given us ; we to whom life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel. We are all "sons of light, and sons of the day . . . so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night ; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love ; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. v. 5).

V.

THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S RAISED OUT OF DEATH BY A CHANGE PASSING UPON THEM, IN WHICH, WHEN THEY PUT OFF THE BODY WE HAVE HERE, THEY AT THE SAME TIME PUT ON THE BODY OF GLORY—THE NECESSITY OF THE CHANGE, AND THE INSTANTANEOUSNESS OF IT.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery : We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; (for the trumpet shall sound ;) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”—I COR. xv. 50-53.

THE Apostle has now obviated one of the difficulties which he anticipated his readers would find in his teaching, their inability to understand with what manner of body the dead come out of death. He has shown them, from the analogy of what we see in the natural world with us here, that it is in no way incredible that men should rise out of death in a new body, and a body quite different in character from that they have now. He has taught them, moreover, that there are different kinds of “flesh,” even in the material bodies of this world, and that there are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial ; the characteristics of the celestial being something quite different from those of the terrestrial : and has set forth to them certain great characteristics of the body in which

we rise out of death, in contrast with the body which we have now.

In the verses quoted above, the Apostle takes up, it would seem, the first difficulty he anticipated they would have, their inability to understand how the dead are raised; and we may see now how natural it was for him to speak of their second difficulty first. For if the dead come out of death in a new and quite different body from that we have now, the question how the dead are raised is already answered, or at least the answer to it is distinctly suggested. It must needs be by a change passing upon them, in which, when they put off the body we have now, they at the same time put on the body belonging to their after state of life.

It is of this change which passes upon men in death that the Apostle now speaks; and what he tells us of it is not less wonderful than the answer he has given to the second difficulty of his readers, and is certainly one of the remarkable things taught us in this great discourse.

He begins here by saying, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." By "the kingdom of God" he means plainly the kingdom of God which is to be hereafter, when death is past, of which he had spoken in the 24th and following verses of the chapter, the state of things which is to come to "them that are Christ's" at Christ's coming, when they enter into their final state of life. And what he says is, that our present body cannot enter into that state of life. Flesh and blood—that is, the natural body which we have here—

cannot enter into a condition of life in which we are in the spiritual world; neither doth a corruptible body enter into a condition of life in which our bodies are incorruptible. This is the necessity there is for the change in regard to the body which passes on "them that are Christ's" in death.

What is said in this verse may seem to conflict with what our Lord says (in Luke xxiv. 39) of His resurrection body, when He speaks of Himself as having "flesh and bones," since the body with which hereafter we are to be clothed is to be like the body of His glory. But what is here said does not really conflict with what Christ thus said of His resurrection body. Our Lord's resurrection body, to those whose senses were supernaturally opened to discern it, had "flesh and bones." The meaning is simply that it was a body which could be touched and handled, a material body. This is all, we apprehend, that Christ conveys to His disciples in using the expression. He told them to handle Him and see that it was He Himself, for a spirit, which they at first took Him to be, had not "flesh and bones," as they saw Him have. He could be touched and handled, that is, He had a material body, and was therefore not a spirit. He presented indeed after His resurrection, to those whose eyes were opened to see Him at all, the same outward form, it would seem, which He had before; and could not only be known by them not to be a spirit by touching Him and handling Him, but could be recognised by them by looking at His hands and feet, which still bore on them the print of the nails. He could also eat and drink. But, in the language of St. Paul in this discourse, "all flesh is not the

same flesh," and "there are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial." Though, to the opened senses of the disciples, He had "flesh and bones," and was therefore not a spirit as they supposed, it was not the same flesh and bones which He had before, but was the body in which He had lived here with them transfigured into a materialism of an altogether different kind. The change which had passed on His body is made as plain in the narrative as the fact that He had still a material body, and that He was the same person. He could now appear suddenly in a room when the doors were shut, and again, while men were looking on Him, He could vanish out of their sight. He had still a material body, but it was not the natural body, the "flesh and blood" of which it is said in this verse that it cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It was a spiritual body.

In Christ's case, the natural body had been simply transfigured into the spiritual, and what was presented to the opened eyes of the disciples was the body He had had before transfigured into a materialism of an entirely different kind. We see the possibility, in Christ's case, of such a transfiguration in the great Transfiguration on the Mount, which took place in the presence of the three disciples. He "was transfigured before them," we are told, and appeared to them in the body of His glory, the body in which as the Son of God, He is seen in heaven, while all the while they recognised Him to be the same person, and then again He resumed the body He had had before. The important thing to be observed by us in regard to Christ's resurrection body is, that though it was a material body, and therefore could be touched and

*material, how could
it vanish? I doubt there
was the same*

handled, it was a material body of an entirely different kind from that in which He lived here. The impossibility of the natural body, the "flesh and blood" which we have here, entering into the higher state of life for us, in the spiritual world which lies beyond death, is the necessity for the change which passes on "them that are Christ's" in death.

He goes on to say, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

When the Apostle calls what he here tells them a "mystery," he uses the word in the sense in which it is always used in the New Testament to signify a secret or forbidden thing. And nothing can be more truly a secret thing to men, a thing hidden from them, than that which the Apostle here reveals to us, what takes place to the dying in death. It is not only a thing which no man has seen, but a thing which, since it takes place in the unseen world, no man here ever can see, and which no one to whom it has taken place has ever returned to tell us of. You have all perhaps seen people die. You have seen the life, as regards its manifestation in the flesh, become gradually weaker and feebler, until it sinks so low that the dying person has manifestly become unconscious to all that is around him here; you have seen it perhaps flickering on, in unconsciousness to the outward world here, until suddenly it passes and is gone. All is still, and there is nothing before you but the dead body, from which the breath of life, from which the living soul, has departed. But what takes place to the dying in that supreme moment of their life here, we do not and never can

see. Over that there is to us an impenetrable veil. This is what the Apostle here undertakes to tell us.

The idea of the heathen, or of those who did not believe in a future life, was that death was a kind of sleep, a sleep which came at last to all men, a sleep from which there was no awaking. The Apostle's revelation of what takes place to the Christian in death is, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The thing which strikes us in this description, as being that on which the stress is laid, is the instantaneousness of the change. "In a moment," "in the twinkling of an eye," "at the last trump." "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Where "the dead"—they who have died—and the "we" are plainly the same parties. The change described, again, is "this corruptible" putting on "incorruption," and "this mortal" putting on "immortality." In all this it is, we think, plain that the change is described as taking place in death.

In the popular view on the subject, the resurrection of the dead, which is taken to mean the resurrection of the dead body, is supposed to take place at an indefinitely distant time in the future—at the end of this world, which is conceived of as occurring at a particular instant of time, supposed to be here indicated by "the last trump." And the "change" here spoken of is, it is supposed, to take place then. In

that case, it is not easy to see how the "change" could be *contrasted* with the sleep of death, since it is in no way inconsistent with death being a kind of sleep. Death might be really a kind of sleep, and yet conceivably this resurrection of the dead body, or this instantaneous change, might take place at the time supposed.

This popular view on the subject, again, involves the idea that the judgment of men, the putting on of the body of the after life, and the entering into the final state of life, are all things which do not take place till the end of this world. Those who hold the popular view on the subject quote passages of Scripture, moreover, in support of this theory. And there are certainly passages of Scripture which, when we interpret figurative language literally, naturally suggest the idea that the judgment of all men takes place at one time, and therefore will not take place till some far distant era, when men can be all judged together; and that till then, therefore, as naturally follows, their final condition is not entered upon. There is the remarkable passage, for instance, in the Book of Revelation, in which, by way of impressing on us the greatness, the supremely righteous character, and the method of the final judgment, it is represented to us under the figure, as it were, of a great earthly assize. The Evangelist sees in vision a great white throne—a throne of light—on which the Judge is seated. The dead, small and great, stand before God. The books, in which the actions of men's lives are recorded, are opened. Another book is opened, which is the book of life, contains, that is, the names of those who have come to have the true life in them.

And the dead are judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. This figurative representation is by many understood as if it were a literal representation of a scene which at a certain period in the earth's history is actually to take place; and when it is thus interpreted, in opposition to its self-evident character as an allegorical vision, it naturally suggests the idea that all men are to be judged at one time, and therefore that the judgment of men does not take place till a time when all men can appear together. But this is an obvious misinterpretation. There is, again, the passage in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, in which the Son of Man is spoken of as coming in His glory, and sitting upon the throne of His glory; and then we are told of all nations being gathered before Him, and of His separating men one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and setting the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left. The coming of the Son of Man in His glory, and His sitting on the throne of His glory, here spoken of, is by many taken to mean, not His coming in His kingdom here, and His sitting as a Judge in His kingdom here—which in our Lord's discourse it plainly is—but His coming personally as a Judge to the earth at some future time—as is supposed, at the end of this world. And in this interpretation it naturally suggests, not a judgment and separation spiritually of men which Christ, through the manifestation of His kingdom, is now making, and which is to be revealed in them individually when their life here ends—as in Christ's discourse it plainly is—but a judgment and separation of men, such as is by many supposed to be

spoken of in the passage just quoted, which takes place, as it were, at a great assize, and in which all men are judged at once.

But beyond such passages as these, in which the judgment of men is spoken of in a figurative representation of it, and in which the time of the judgment is popularly supposed to be the end of this world, simply because the figurative representation is taken literally—that is, in a sense quite different from what is plainly intended—there are other passages in which the judgment of men, as regards the time of it, is spoken of in plain words; and these latter are quite inconsistent with the meaning put into the former class of passages. There are passages also in which the time at which we put on the body of the after life is plainly spoken of; and passages, again, in which the time at which men enter into the final state of life, or into heaven, is plainly told us; all of which are equally inconsistent with the popular interpretation of the passages already quoted.

And we apprehend that we are to interpret the figurative representations of the New Testament by its literal statements, and to take our idea of the time at which these great things take place from the passages in which the time of their taking place is plainly and expressly spoken of. The question is, whether in the direct and express teaching on the subject of the New Testament, the final judgment of men, the putting on of the body belonging to the after life, and the entrance of men into the final state of life, are spoken of as taking place at death, or, on the other hand, are spoken of as taking place at some distant era in the future, as is supposed at the end of this world.

First, as to the judgment of men. It is, we apprehend, constantly spoken of, as it regards Christians, as taking place at the "coming," or "revelation," or "appearing" of Christ. Thus St. Paul says in this very Epistle, "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (1 Cor. iv. 5). St. Peter says, again, to the same effect, "That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 7).

The proof of their faith was here; the judgment of them, or rather the revelation of the judgment regarding them, was to be at the coming of Christ. So also St. John says, "And now, my little children, abide in Him, that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John ii. 28). We have already shown how clear it is in the New Testament that the "coming" or "manifestation" of Christ takes place to the Christian at death, when he enters into the after life. But if any doubt whether this be so, we are expressly told that after death cometh judgment. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this (cometh) judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). Are we to understand that "after this" does not mean after death in the ordinary sense of that expression, but is spoken with regard to a time which has not yet come to any of the dead, and is not to come till the end of this world?

Secondly, in regard to the putting on the body belonging to the after life. This also is spoken of as taking place at the coming or manifestation of Christ; and this, it is distinctly implied, is equivalent to saying that it takes place at death. St. Paul says, speaking in the name of all Christians of the time, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, (that it may be) conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 20). The fashioning anew the body of our humiliation conformed to the body of His glory is to take place, we are here taught, at the appearing of Christ, and the expression implies plainly that the change spoken of takes place at death. If we stand in any doubt, again, as to when this appearing of Christ to us from heaven, at which He is to accomplish this bodily change in us, takes place—whether it is to take place at death or at some distant era in the future—we have the same St. Paul saying in another Epistle, "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). This surely implies distinctly that the change to the body of glory takes place at death.

Thirdly, in regard to the time of entering into the final state of life, or into heaven.

On the Mount of the Transfiguration Moses and Elijah "appeared in glory"—that is, in their body of glory. How could this be if the entrance into this glory for men—that is, if the entrance into heaven—is not to be till some era in the still far distant future?

Our Lord, again, said to the penitent thief on the

cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The Apostles also speak of Judas, after his death, as having gone "to his own place." In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ speaks of Lazarus as dying and being "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom;" and says, on the other hand, of the rich man, when he died, that "in Hades"—that is, in the unseen world—"he lifted up his eyes"—lifted them up, that is, out of death—"being in torments" (Luke xvi. 19). To be "in Paradise," or to be "in Abraham's bosom," is surely in the plainest language, in the language in common use at the time to express this, to be in heaven, in the final state of the blessed. On the other hand, a wicked man having gone "to his own place," or a man "lifting up his eyes" out of death and "being in torments," is surely, in either case, in any rational interpretation of the words, being in the final state of the lost. St. Paul says, again, in the continuation of a passage we have already quoted, regarding the changing of the earthly tabernacle for the body of glory at death, "For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. v. 4). And again, in the same passage he says, "Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight;) we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord" (ver. 6). To be in a state of life in which "what is mortal" has been "swallowed up of life," and to be "at home with the Lord," we apprehend, must needs be to be in heaven. It

must be to be in the place which Christ, by His presence in it, has gone to prepare for us, and from which He is, we are told, to come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is we may also be; and this can be none other than heaven. And to be absent from the body—that is, to pass out of this present life—is with us, the Apostle here says, to be at home with the Lord.

It is to be observed again, finally, that there is no passage in the New Testament in which the great events in question are spoken of, in which any of them is said to take place at the end of this world. It is only by a purely fanciful interpretation of the words used that this is anywhere supposed to be said. Our Lord speaks frequently, for instance, of His raising up those who are His “at the last day.” He speaks also of the word which He had spoken as that which would judge those who heard it “at the last day.” St. Peter, again, says of the everlasting inheritance of life that it is “ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter i. 5). And in the popular apprehension with us, “the last day,” or “the last time,” is made to be the last day of this world, or the time that comes after the end of this world. But in the expressions themselves there is nothing said of the end of this world; what is spoken of, we apprehend, in the natural meaning of the words, is simply the end of life here to us; and the popular interpretation of the expressions is suggested simply by the preconceived notions that are in the popular mind. “At the last day” is simply an expression, we apprehend, for “when life here is ended,” and “the last time” an expression for “the time that comes after the end of life here.” In the passage in St. Peter,

“the last time” is, in a verse immediately following, identified with “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (ver. 7), of the time of which we have already spoken.

If the plainest language which could naturally be used by the speakers in the passages quoted has its ordinary meaning, the language of these passages, we apprehend, must mean that to die is to have the judgment of God revealed on us, to put on the body belonging to the after life, and to be in the final state of our life, so far as we can speak of anything in the future which is beyond death as final.

The teaching of these passages is entirely in accordance with, and simply sets forth to us in other form, the teaching contained in the text. They are all of them a confirmation of the teaching contained in the text. Only in the text the instantaneousness of the change in which at death we put on the body belonging to the after life is revealed and set forth to us as it nowhere else is. It is set forth in answer to those who had difficulty in believing in an after life because they could not understand how the dead are raised out of death; and therefore the change which passes on men in death is set forth as it never had been revealed before, and in language certainly which is infinitely fitted to impress us. The text tells us that not a moment, not the twinkling of an eye, intervenes betwixt our ceasing to live in the body we have here and our putting on the body of our after life. Beyond the veil of death we rise out of death in the form of our after life. There is in death no break at all in our life: the life we have here and the higher life which we have beyond are continuous. The change takes place instantaneously. Thus it is

that the dead are raised out of death into an after life. We seem, to an onlooker, to have passed out of existence, because the breath of our present life has ceased, because the living soul has passed away, and the tabernacle, as a dwelling-place for us, is dissolved. But the ceasing to exist is only in appearance. The tabernacle in which we now live is but our temporary dwelling-place. And if it is dissolved, we have a house which is not made with hands, and which is eternal, in the heavens. Our life passes away here in death, but it is raised beyond death immediately in a higher form of life. And the dead body on which you look, from which the spirit has departed, is not the person you loved, and who perhaps spoke to you a few minutes ago, but only the tabernacle, the temporary dwelling-place in which he was, which is now dissolved. That is true of him now which was once said of a higher, "He is not here; He is risen." We do not all sleep in death, but we are all changed, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

The "last trump" is simply the call of death, the call which summons us to the after life. The figure is taken from the custom, prevalent with the Jews and other nations of the time, of calling solemn assemblies together, or of calling the host together, by the repeated sound of a trumpet. It is simply the call of death, the call which summons us to the after life. "For the trumpet shall sound" means simply "for the call of death shall come;" and what is revealed here is, that when this call of God comes to us individually, we shall be changed—that is, we shall put off the present body of our humiliation, and put on in

its place the body of the after life, the body of glory. When we cease to live in the body we have here, we rise out of death in the body which belongs to the higher life to come. This change, he tells us, will take place instantaneously: "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Then "the dead"—they who have died—are "raised incorruptible," and we are "changed."

The Apostle adds, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

There is a necessity, as regards them that are Christ's, for the change of which he has been speaking, as he has already said, because our present body cannot enter into the kingdom of God, into that higher state of our life that lies, for the Christian, beyond death. And now he tells us, it would seem, as regards men generally, as a thing that belongs naturally to human life, that the corruptible body we have here must put on incorruption, and the mortal body put on immortality. This takes place naturally, we seem to be here taught, according to the order of human life. For the higher, the spiritual state of our being, is a thing which lies before all men. There are naturally two stages in human life. We live here in a corruptible mortal body, which is fitted to the life of this world, and we are to live hereafter in a higher state of our being which is to endure for ever, and in a body belonging to that higher state of our being, which is incorruptible and immortal. It belongs to the natural order of human life that this change from the corruptible and the mortal to incorruption and immortality should come to all men at death. How

the change would have taken place if men had not sinned we do not know. Perhaps our natural body would simply have been transfigured, as in Christ's case, and as in the cases, it would seem, of Enoch and of Elijah, into the spiritual body, the body belonging to the higher state of human life. As it is, the change takes place through death, and must take place with all men. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The passage we have been considering is, for us as Christians, one of the utmost significance. And the teaching in it on which we have particularly dwelt is especially fitted to excite serious thought in us. It should especially impress on us vividly our nearness to the eternal world.

Our nearness to the after life is not in general at all realised by us as this passage should lead us to realise it. There is a book "On the Scripture Revelations regarding a Future State," written by a late prelate of the Church of England, eminent for his intellectual gifts and his great acuteness of mind, but not perhaps very eminent as a theologian. In his discussion of the subject he recognises the popularly received idea that the resurrection of men is the resurrection of the dead body, and is not to take place till the end of the world, and that there is therefore a disembodied and intermediate state between death and the resurrection. And he sets forth the passages of Scripture, on the one hand, which seem, he thinks, to imply that this intermediate state is a state of enjoyment or of suffering, to the faithful and the disobedient respectively, and, on the other hand, those which seem to imply that it is a state of unconscious sleep.

He ends by finding himself unable to decide positively between the two views.

The arguments on the one side and on the other are of the most shadowy character, for there is not the least apparent reference in the one class of passages quoted or in the other to a disembodied or intermediate state, the existence of which is throughout a pure assumption. But you feel in reading the book that whichever of the two views be taken, in either case, and in either case alike, the final state of life for men, in which they have come to the resurrection life, is at so indefinitely great a distance in the remote future, so greatly and indefinitely remote from us, that it is hardly fitted to excite any present interest or inquiry in us. In like manner there are many people with us with quite undefined notions about the after life, who have the feeling simply that men pass at death into some new state of life, they know not what, but that the final state of things for us, the resurrection and the state of things which follows upon it, are far off from us, at some remote period, which they think of as "the consummation of all things." The prospect of the future life has therefore hardly any meaning to them, and has no real influence on their daily life.

It is quite another thing, and is fitted to have quite a different influence on our daily life, when we realise that the resurrection, as it regards us, and the final state of things with us, are in the near future, and will come to all of us with the end of our life here, which may, we know, come to us at any time: when we come to realise day by day, in a true apprehension of the revelation of the gospel to us, that, under the New Testament dispensation, just as we have come to

“Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant,” and to “the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel,” so also we have come to “God, the Judge of all,” and to “the spirits of just men made perfect.” We can then understand the state of feeling in regard to “the coming of Christ” in which the early Christians and their teachers lived their daily lives here: which some in our day explain by taking upon them to say that it was founded upon a temporary mistake or misapprehension of the Apostles that the end of this world was then at hand; but which, we are persuaded, was founded simply on what is the stable and uniform teaching of the New Testament: and we can feel the force of the exhortations which the Apostles constantly address to the early Church, which have lost all meaning to most Christians with us. We can feel the force of the exhortation, for instance, when, amidst trouble come upon them as Christians, an Apostle says to them, “Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming (or, presence) of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it (or, he) receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming (presence) of the Lord is at hand” (James v. 7). Or when he adds, “Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors” (ver. 9). When another Apostle, again, says, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer” (1 Peter iv. 7). Or when still another Apostle, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, exhorting the disciples to live their lives in the love to men to which in Christ they were called,

adds to the exhortation, "And this, knowing the season, that now it is high time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us (or, our salvation nearer) than when we (first) believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day" (Rom. xiii. 11). For these exhortations have, in truth, quite as much meaning, and have just the same meaning, to us as to those to whom they were originally addressed.

And, along with the nearness of the after life to us, we should realise always the greatness of the change which death brings to us as Christians. The difference betwixt the life we have here and the resurrection life, in many of the things belonging to it, is expressed or suggested in the preceding passage of this great discourse; things of which we can only have a very shadowy and imperfect apprehension. The coming *day* will declare them to us. But beyond these things, the great difference to them that are Christ's, in the change lying before us, is that it is our entering into a sinless life; into a life which is in perfect righteousness, and in entire separation from all evil: which is a thing we can in some sense apprehend, as it is doubtless the greatest thing in the life of heaven. The prospect is one which should give us much thought, and which may well have an elevating influence on our life here day by day, leading us, in the Spirit which we have received, to work the work which is given us to do here, as knowing that the night cometh when no man can work. The change before us is our entering into the higher state

of our life, in which we are with Christ, with all those enlarged capacities which belong with us to our life in the spiritual world, and at the same time our entering into a perfect, in the sense of a sinless, rightness of life towards God and towards men ; into a service of God which is in perfect light, and therefore in perfect rectitude. When death is past, we shall be in a life in which the mists and self-delusions which cloud our life here shall have passed away in the clear light of heaven, and in a life which, having the form and character belonging to life in the spiritual world for men, is at the same time in perfect separation from all evil, and in an ever-growing attainment in righteousness. Then, amidst the things to which we have come in that higher life, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory."

VI.

THE VICTORY OVER DEATH WHICH THE CHRISTIAN HAS IN CHRIST.

“But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. xv. 54-57).

THIS song of triumph, for such it is, which comes plainly from the very heart of the Apostle, is surely of all triumphal songs the greatest and the most full of joy. If only, in our life here, we could join in it from the heart, and could with St. Paul repeat for ourselves its concluding thanksgiving, the cloud which to most of us lowers over our human life here would be dispelled, and the future to us would be bright and serene. The triumph it celebrates is not the triumph over their human enemies with which the ancient Roman world was so well acquainted, in which their fellow-men over whom they had gotten the victory were led captive in chains, the glory of which was simply the gratification of the brutal lust for dominion and for crushing those we have learned to hate, which is amongst the lowest and worst passions of human nature; but a triumph over death, the last enemy of man, over which God in Christ has given us the victory, the glory of which is

the greatest and the purest joy we can experience here, and a joy which shall be in us for ever. It is a song of triumph which many of us, it is to be feared, Christians as we are, have not learned to sing, and the joy of which has never come to us. And the first question we are to ask is, who are they that can sing this song? What is it that gives men the joy of this victory?

We are to begin by observing that the victory which this song of triumph celebrates is not a victory in the present, but a victory of which he who can sing this song has the prospect in the future. It is "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality," that the saying which is written shall be brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Nevertheless Christ gives us this victory now in prospect, and it is over the prospect of this victory that the song is sung, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." With this preliminary observation, let me say, in answer to the question I have suggested, that they who can sing this song of triumph are they who have come to the redemption, the deliverance from sin which is in Christ; and that it is the sense, the apprehension in ourselves of this deliverance from sin, that gives us the joy of this victory.

What is it that makes men fear death? or that keeps many in bondage all their lifetime through that fear? There is a natural shrinking from death with all men, or all men in their right mind, in whatever spiritual condition they are; which has been by some taken to imply, perhaps without any good reason, that death is an unnatural thing for men, a thing which was not originally intended for us. The feeling

is greatest with those who *think* most of things, whose intellectual faculties are, so to speak, most vividly alive; and, in any distressing form, it is perhaps confined to those whose minds are lively and speculative. For death is one of the many things here in regard to which thought troubles life. But there have been men of the highest character spiritually, and of the utmost natural courage, who have had this nervous shrinking from death. They have had this nervous shrinking from death because of the unknown life to which death was to bring them, realising acutely how entirely unknown the life that is beyond death is to us. Or they have had it, in some instances, because they could not put away from themselves the thought that death *may* be a passing into non-existence; insomuch that the thought has, for the moment, even raised doubts in them as to the existence of a future life, in spite of the higher reason in them, and the light which has been given to us from above, which taught them to look forward to it. But this natural shrinking from death is not the fear of death and, in any form of it, may be in those who do not really *fear* death. And it may easily be overcome by any higher feeling for the time possessing the mind, as it is in fact overcome in trying circumstances by men of every kind. All fear of death—that is, really fear of it—is the fear of something which lies beyond death; and the only thing which makes men fear death is the consciousness in them of life in sin. The only thing that makes death an object of fear to a man, the *sting* of death, is sin; not the consciousness of sin, or of imperfection in us, which is common to all men, but the consciousness

of life in sin. The consciousness that the life which is in us, the life we allow in ourself and to which we cleave, is not the life to which God has called us, and which should be in us, but a life which is in separation from God and in rebellion against Him. This is what makes death an object of fear to a man. He fears death because, living consciously in sin, he fears that which comes after death.

“And the power of sin,” that which gives us the consciousness of life in sin, and therefore gives to that life its power to produce the fear of death in us, “is the law.” To the Jews, the law of God was the Ten Commandments; to us, it is a higher law—“the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” We have not, indeed, all of us had this inward law, this spirit of life, put within us, in the sense that it is that by which we guide our life; but we have all, in some sense, the apprehension that, under the New Testament, inward cleansing from evil and inward righteousness of mind and spirit are required of us, and not simply obedience to the letter of the Ten Commandments. And this knowledge of the life to which God has called us, when we live consciously in sin, produces in us naturally the fear of death. It produces in us self-condemnation, and therefore the apprehension which belongs naturally to the evil life which we are living, that in regard to this life in us God will bring us into judgment. This is what is meant by the fear of death. And so long as a man is living in sin, and has the apprehension of the law of God for him, he cannot, in his right mind, be without fear in the prospect of death. But the Christian, the man who lives by the faith of Christ, is redeemed and

delivered from life in sin. He has come, through his faith in Christ, to have the spirit of Christ in him, and to be living in that spirit in his life here, and has in him, therefore, a life which is in separation from sin and in fellowship with the heavenly righteousness; and in the newness of life to which he has come, he is redeemed and delivered from life in sin, and has in him the prospect hereafter of a victory over death. In the spirit which he has received he has in him that which gives him the joy of this victory.

What is the redemption or deliverance from sin which is in Christ? There is nothing in Christianity of which it is more important for us, as Christians, to have a distinct apprehension. It is, let me say, redemption or deliverance from sin itself, and not merely from the consequences of sin. It is redemption from sin in the sense of redemption from the bondage to sin in which all men are who live consciously in sin. It is redemption from life in sin. It stands in a new spirit of life, the spirit of Christ, put within us from above through our faith in Christ; in which, so far as we live in it, there is no sin; in which, so far as we live in it, we live in fellowship with God's righteousness. It does not mean that we are without sin, but that, in the spirit which we have received, we no longer live in sin, but live in fellowship with the righteousness of God. They who live consciously in sin are in bondage to sin, in the sense that, having yielded themselves servants to sin, they have no power to cease to live in sin. And they can be set free from life in sin only by a new spirit of life, the spirit of Christ being put within them from above, in which

there is no sin. The redemption stands in the new spirit of life which Christ gives us through our faith in Him; and when the power of that redemption rests upon us, when we live in the spirit which Christ gives us through our faith in Him, we cease to live in sin, and live, on the contrary, in God's righteousness. We live only by putting all sin away from us, and by putting to death the inclinations to evil that are in us, and we live in fellowship with the rectitude of Christ and of God. The redemption spiritually which is in Christ for us, and to which we come through the faith of Christ, stands in this great spiritual change in us. All who are living by the faith of Christ, all who in their daily life are in Christ, have thus become new creatures, and, in the redemption from sin to which they have come, have already in them the life of heaven in the beginning of it.

It is only they who have come to the redemption from sin which is in Christ, in which thus we have in us the eternal life which Christ came to give to men, who can sing the song of triumph of the text, or who can say, with the Apostle, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." For it is they only who have the prospect in the world to come of the after life in righteousness to which the victory over death belongs. All men rise out of death into an after life, but the mere rising out of death into an after life is not obtaining the victory over death, and all who have passed through death into the after life have not obtained that victory. A lost soul which has risen out of death has not obtained the victory over it; rather death has obtained the victory over it. Death has

only brought to it the second death—that is, spiritual destruction. It is only in the everlasting life in righteousness, in the higher state of human life, that death is swallowed up in victory, and it is only they who have come here to the redemption from sin which is in Christ that have the prospect in the future of that victory. But they have the prospect in the future of obtaining the victory over death, and therefore they are they who can sing this song of triumph; they have that in them, in the spirit they have received, which gives them the joy of this victory.

If we ask now, secondly, What is the joy of this coming victory in us? the answer is contained simply in saying, It is that death has no longer any sting to us. Death in itself is simply the passing out of life here into the life that is beyond, and we are raised above the fear of death because beyond death we have the prospect of entering into an everlasting life in righteousness. What is it that naturally takes away the fear of death from a man? It can only be something which gives us confidence in looking beyond death; and in the life spiritually to which we have come in Christ we have quietness of mind, a hope which is sure and certain, and a hope which is also full of joy, in regard to that which death will bring to us. We may not be able to realise the after life; we may not be able even to form any apprehension of it at all, because the outward circumstances of that life are entirely hidden from us, but we have confidence in regard to what it will bring to us. Nothing really gives a man that confidence or that joyful hope but the rightness of spirit come to us from above, the

newness of life which is put within us by the faith of Christ. A faith in Christ which has not produced in a man this spiritual change and this spiritual restoration, whatever be the form it takes in him, does not and cannot give him this confidence or this joyful hope; for it is the rightness of spirit, the newness of life in fellowship with that of Christ, to which by God's grace we have come, which *itself* gives us confidence and a joyful hope in looking forward to the everlasting future. The spiritual life which Christ came to give us, when it has come to be in us, is the element in which confidence in regard to the future that lies beyond death lives in us; and, apart from this life, there can be no well-grounded hope in regard to that future in any man. Our confidence in regard to the future arises in us naturally and instinctively out of this life, and the joy of the coming victory over death in us is just the hope we have of this life abiding in us hereafter when death is past. In this life in us which Christ came to give us there is an element of confidence in our unseen Judge, and we can hope to have "boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ is, so are we in this world." "Christ in us" is to us "the hope of glory." We have the joy of the coming victory over death in us because we have in us the hope of the inheritance of life which is set before us in the gospel, and death is no longer an object of fear to us because we have the prospect of the victory over it.

It is strange that the thought of the blessed life to come, in its purity and its peace and its fulness of joy, is so little present with us in our life here; that the joy of the coming victory over death is therefore so

little in us day by day. I do not know that there is any other way in which a change in this respect can be wrought in us, and the world to come to which we look forward become to us what it should be, except simply our living the life here day by day to which Christ has redeemed us, out of which we naturally rise into the expectation of the life to come. It is our duty and our privilege so to live, and it is that out of which all joy in looking forward to the future must come to us. An Apostle's precept in this respect to us is, "And now, my little children, abide in Him; that if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John ii. 28).

Live your daily life here in the spirit which Christ gives us in our faith in Him, crucifying the flesh in you, and fighting the good fight of faith, that you may so live. Live in this spirit in the mind that is in you towards God in your life here, having in you, amidst things here, the rest in God, the trust in Him, the joy in Him which Christ's Spirit gives you. Live in this Spirit in the mind that is in you towards men, having the love of Christ to men in you, in your thoughts and feelings and words and actions towards all men around you. Seek continually, day by day, in every sphere of life in which you move here, to bring forth the fruits of Christ's Spirit in you, which are in all goodness and righteousness and truth. While this is the life that is in you here, you will naturally and instinctively look forward to the blessed life to come, of which in this spirit of life in you God has given you the earnest, and be able to have in you the joy of the coming victory over death. Ever as you rise

more fully into this life which is in Christ here, in its affections and aspirations, and in its doings, in its separation from evil and its fellowship with the heavenly righteousness, the hope of the blessed life to come will become clearer and brighter to you, and the victory over death which it is to bring to us will be to you a fuller joy. You will have, day by day, a livelier anticipation of the life to come. For heaven, however little we can realise the outward things belonging to it, is just your taking this life with you, to which by God's grace you have come, when you leave this world, and having it developed in you in the clear light which is to be hereafter. You will be able to realise, in your daily experience here, that a Christian, in all earthly circumstances, can have in him the joy of the coming victory over death; and, in the anticipation of the triumph over death which the after life is to bring to you, will be able to say day by day what the Apostle says here, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let me say, in conclusion, that the joy of this coming victory in us should express itself in continual thanksgiving to God. Not in thanksgiving for the future, but in thanksgiving for the present in the prospect which it gives us of the future; in thanksgiving for the eternal life which is His unspeakable gift to us in Christ. Let us seek to live more fully the life to which Christ has redeemed us, that, in the prospect of the victory over death which the life of the coming future is to bring to us, we may have in us

always the anticipation of that victory, and that our life here may be more full of praise.

“ The First-begotten of the dead,
For us He rose, our glorious Head,
Immortal life to bring.
What though the Saints like Him shall die ;
They share their Leader’s victory,
And triumph with their King.”

VII.

THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE PROSPECT THE CHRISTIAN HAS OF
THE VICTORY OVER DEATH SHOULD HAVE ON HIS LIFE
HERE.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord.”—1 COR. xv. 58.

CHRISTIANITY has always a practical meaning. So far as the spirit of it is in us, it shows itself in our life. The revelation of God to us in His infinite love and grace which is in Christ is intended to create a divine life in us, and the prospect of the coming victory over death into which a Christian life raises us is especially fitted to uphold us in that life. It is a ministration of grace to us, as the text implies, to uphold us in “the work of the Lord.”

What is “the work of the Lord” of which the text speaks? On this subject it is important for every Christian to have a clear and definite apprehension. Plainly, in the Apostle’s view, it is a work to which, as Christians, Christ is calling us in our life, a work which belongs to all Christians, and the great work which we have to do in our life. But it is still needful to ask the question what it is. It is, let me say, the work simply of living in the spirit which Christ has given to us, of living this life to which Christ has called us

in the circumstances in which, in God's providence, we are placed. This is the work naturally belonging to us as Christians, as those who have been renewed in the spirit of their mind through the faith of Christ, and it is the proper work of life here for us, the work which the Lord has given us severally to do. This work given us to do in our life is as really a work, a thing requiring continual effort and labour on our part, as is the earthly and outward work in which we put forth our mental or bodily energies from day to day; only it is a work of a spiritual kind. It is different for each of us severally, according to the different circumstances in which we are placed, but in the nature of it, and in the things in us belonging to it, it is the same for every Christian. It is the work of having in us here, day by day, the life to which Christ has redeemed us. It is a work of self-denial, of fortitude, of understanding, of patience, of love to God our Saviour, of love to our fellow-men around us, of these and all the other graces of Christ's Spirit, as they are severally called for from us here. For this work of His for us Christ has given us a divine and all-sufficient strength in the spirit which He has given to us, and which He is willing to give us according to all our need. And the purpose of the work is that, through the trial of our life here in this world, the life to which Christ has redeemed us may be strengthened and established in us, and that we may thus be prepared for the life of heaven hereafter. This work of the Lord is the proper work of a Christian in his life here. It is the proper business of life for him.

There is a notion with many Christians in our day, belonging specially to the religion of the day, that the

work of the Lord for every Christian is to occupy himself in teaching or enlightening others. The work of the Lord for us is supposed to have others, not ourselves, for the object of it. The idea is that every Christian is called to be a teacher of religion; but this is entirely a mistake, and is a thing which is nowhere taught us in the New Testament. The work of teaching and enlightening others in the things of religion belongs specially, in the New Testament, to the ministers of the Church, who have been set apart to the work, although doubtless every Christian, in his own place, may take part in it. But both to you and to me the work of the Lord has nothing to do with the teaching of others, but is a work that regards ourselves. It is the work of living the right life for us here, the greatest of all works for any man, and the work by which we are to be individually prepared for the life of heaven hereafter. It is this great work for every Christian to which the Apostle refers when he says, "Work out your own salvation."

We are to realise, as the concluding lesson of this great discourse, that the prospect we have of the coming victory over death should uphold us in this work of the Lord, should make us "steadfast, and unmoveable, always abounding" in it.

Let me observe, first, that in the Apostle's view here, as in the teaching of the New Testament everywhere, the work of the Lord, for each of us, is of the nature of a spiritual conflict. It is a conflict, a good fight of faith, in which we engage in the power of the spirit of Christ in us—a conflict not merely with the evil influences that come to us from the world around us here, and the evil inclinations that are in ourselves,

but with the spiritual powers of evil, the rulers of the darkness of this world, who through these influences around us, and these evil inclinations within us, are seeking to turn us aside from the life to which we are called, and to regain their dominion over us. The work requires, therefore, some of the qualities of the soldier in us. An indispensable quality of a good soldier in any earthly warfare is that he have the self-possession, the courage, the self-sacrifice, the resolute spirit, which in all circumstances will give him steadfastness in the hour of conflict, a steadfastness from which he cannot be turned by any opposition whatever with which he has to contend—an immoveable steadfastness, which is sustained in him by the hope of victory, or else by his calmly choosing death rather than dishonour to his standard. And such steadfastness and immoveability are indispensable in the good soldier of Jesus Christ in contending with our spiritual adversaries—a steadfastness in which he maintains the conflict in all circumstances, and in which no opposition of evil can turn him aside from the life which has been given to him. We can live the life here to which we are called only by obtaining a continual victory in this great conflict over our spiritual adversaries, and for this ample power is given us in the spirit which we have received. Against the utmost power of our spiritual adversaries we can always obtain the victory if we are steadfast. In the spirit which we have received we are able to stand against all their power, and can "in all things be more than conquerors through Him that loved us." The prospect of the coming victory over death should make us thus steadfast and immoveable.

Then it is to be considered that the work of the Lord for us, if it be done by us aright, is a work in which we engage willingly, with our heart and mind ; and it is a work, therefore, in which we should always abound. It has place in everything belonging to our life here, in all our thoughts, and feelings, and words, and actions.

It is a work, moreover, which should appear in an ever higher form in our life, since of the life to which we are called the only pattern is the perfect life, the life of heaven, as it has, in the spirit of it, been manifested to us in Christ. Of the mind towards God, for instance, which is in us amidst things here, there should be a manifestation in everything belonging to our life.

And there is no limit to the extent in which a right mind towards God may take a higher form in us, in which we may rise more fully into trust in Him, into rest in Him, into joy in Him, and into childlike obedience to Him in the things belonging to the life we live day by day. And so also of the mind towards our fellow-men which should be in us as disciples of Christ. It should be manifested in all our thoughts of others, in all our feelings towards them, in our words and in our actions. And there is no limit to the extent in which a right mind towards men may be in us. For the mind towards men which should be in us is the mind of Christ towards them to which we may make nearer and ever nearer approach, although we shall never rise in this world into an entire fellowship with it. The reward to us is in the life itself, and is the greater the more we abound in the things belonging to it.

Let me observe, secondly, beyond all this, that our maintaining this life, our having this life in us day by day, is the natural and proper preparation of us for the life of heaven to which we look forward. We are to be steadfast and immoveable in maintaining the conflict through which we reach it, as knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This life in us is our natural preparation for heaven, the preparation for it which God is giving us. It is our natural preparation for heaven because it is the life of heaven in us in the beginning of it. God is creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto the good works which He has before ordained that we should walk in them, and we are building up in ourselves the life which we shall take with us hence, and which shall be in us for ever. We are laying up treasures in heaven, in this work of the Lord for us, which cannot be taken away from us, of which we can never be deprived. We are building a house spiritually which shall stand for ever.

It may be that the life of Christ is attainable by us here in only a very imperfect measure, even by those Christians who make the highest attainment in it. Our understanding of the life of Christ is imperfect, and will ever be imperfect here. Our rightness of spirit is imperfect. Everything with us is imperfect. Doubtless there will be a purity from evil and a perfection of rectitude in the life of hereafter of which we cannot now even form the conception. But our attainment in this life is the beginning in us here of the life of hereafter, in that resurrection and more glorious form of our life to which we look forward.

God has called us to His kingdom in the glory of it; and the measure to which we have attained in the life of Christ here, amidst the darkness of this world, is that by which God has made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

APPENDIX.

*ON THE SCRIPTURE TEACHING REGARDING
THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.*

APPENDIX.

ON THE SCRIPTURE TEACHING REGARDING THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

THE second coming of Christ has from time to time occupied a large space in speculative theology. The common apprehension in our day is that Christ is to come again personally to the earth at the end of this world; and that then, at the end of this world, when Christ has thus come again personally to the earth, the judgment and separation of men is to take place, and the final state of things with them is to begin. This is supposed to be taught in the New Testament, and this is supposed to be the coming of Christ, or the appearing of Christ, which is so frequently spoken of in the Epistles of the New Testament. To me, this supposed personal coming of Christ to the earth at the end of this world seems to be founded simply on a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the language of the New Testament.

There are plainly, it would seem, two comings of Christ spoken of in the New Testament as then future. There is His coming in His kingdom, which is certainly frequently spoken of in the Gospels, and frequently also, it would seem, in the Epistles, and which, when the Gospels and the Epistles were written, was then

near at hand; and there is His personal coming again, or appearing, to His disciples, of which He spoke to them when He was about to leave the earth, that He might receive them to Himself, that where He was they might be also; which is always near to His disciples here, and at which, it would seem plain, the judgment, as it regards them individually, is to take place, and they are to enter into the final state of things with them. His coming again personally to His disciples, or to "them that are spiritually His," is spoken of in the Gospels only in the discourse in which the promise of it is given, but is, it would seem, constantly spoken of or referred to in the Epistles; and is, we apprehend, the only "second coming" of Christ for us, and the only personal coming again of Christ which is anywhere spoken of in the New Testament.

The two classes of passages in which these two comings of Christ respectively are spoken of in the New Testament are, it seems to me, quite distinguishable from one another; but in modern interpretations of the New Testament they are constantly confounded with one another, and by far the greater number of both classes of passages are, by the mere fancy of the interpreter, taken to refer to a coming of Christ which, it is supposed, is to take place at the end of this world. It is needful, I apprehend, to speak of the two comings of Christ separately from one another, to distinguish the two classes of passages which refer to each of them respectively, and to consider what is said in each of the classes of passages of the coming of Christ to which they refer; and needful, moreover, to realise that no such thing is spoken of as a personal

coming again of Christ to the earth at the end of this world, but that the expressions in which this is supposed to be contained have been entirely misapprehended.

I shall speak first of the coming again of Christ, promised in His last discourse to His disciples, because it is the coming again or appearing of Christ to His disciples which is spoken of in this discourse in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians, and is, as it seems to me, the only second coming of Christ for us; and shall speak afterwards of His coming in His kingdom, which has long ago taken place, His kingdom having now come, and being present with us.

The coming again or appearing of Christ personally to His disciples, as I have remarked in the foregoing book, is spoken of by Christ Himself in the Gospels in only one discourse. The promise of it is given, for the first time, in His last discourse to His disciples, immediately before His death. What He said was spoken to them to comfort them regarding His departure from them. He said to them, as we have His words recorded in the 14th chapter of St. John, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God" (or believe in God), "believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions" (that is, many dwelling-places): "if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

The promise is given in the last sentence here. And the meaning we naturally put upon the promise, which the language in which it is expressed and the

circumstances naturally lead us to put upon it, is that He was to come again and receive His disciples to Himself—that is, to the place to which He was going—when they passed out of this world at death. The promise, in the language in which it is expressed, is made to the disciples only, and made specially to them. It is implied that the promise was soon to be fulfilled, since the very purpose of it was to comfort them regarding His departure from them; and it was plainly to be fulfilled in the future world, since it is a promise that He would come again, and receive them to Himself—that is, to the place, the particular dwelling-place of His Father, to which He was going, “that where He was, there they might be also.” The disciples did not at the time see the meaning of the promise, because they did not realise the circumstances as we now apprehend them. They did not as yet realise or think that He was about to die; and although He had distinctly intimated, in the promise itself, that He was going to the Father, they did not know, as Thomas said, whither He was going.

In the continuation of the discourse He refers again to the promise He has made to them, repeating what He had before told them, that He was going to the Father. “Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe” (John xiv. 28). Where, again, in this reference to the promise made to them, the coming again promised is expressly to the disciples only, and not to men in general: “I go away, and I come again

unto you." And He repeats the promise that, when He has gone away, they may realise that He has gone to the Father.

In an after part of the same discourse He said to them again, "A little while and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me" (John xvi. 16). Where, as we have already remarked, it is plainly intimated to them that His coming again to them would be only a little while after He had left the earth, and it is also implied that it would be when they went "to the Father," as He was now about to do. It is just what He had previously intimated to Peter. "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards" (chap. xiii. 36). He adds here, in explanation of what He had just said, "Do ye inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, A little while, and ye behold me not, and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh from you" (John xvi. 19-22). Where, again, their seeing Him again is plainly to be at the end of their present sorrow, since it is to be the taking of it away, and the joy of seeing Him again is a joy that is to be with them for ever.

Along with what is said by Christ to His disciples in this discourse we are to take with us what He says

in the last passage of the intercessory prayer of the 17th chapter, which immediately follows: "Father, that which (or those whom) Thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

The supposition that the promise given in the passage we have been considering is of something that was to take place at the end of this world, which is the prevalent idea in our day, is entirely gratuitous, there being nothing whatever said of the end of this world; and it is in the face of the language used in the discourse, the words He uses, as we have seen, plainly suggesting and conveying a nearer and more rational ground of comfort.

This is what is to be said of the first announcement of Christ's coming again to His disciples, the only announcement of it which is made in the Gospels; and the announcement was very soon after repeated, or rather another divine intimation of it made to them, throwing further light to them on the subject.

The Crucifixion took place immediately after the promise of Christ's coming to them again was given to the disciples, and was followed by the Resurrection, and, after a few weeks, by His open Ascension into heaven; and what took place at the Ascension is thus described to us: "And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as (or, more

simply, even as) ye beheld Him going into heaven” (Acts i. 10, 11). The language in which this divine intimation is made to the disciples plainly implies, we are to observe, that His coming again to them had been already told them; and what is added here to the first announcement of it is simply that He should so come, even as they beheld Him going into heaven—that is, that He should come in the same glorified body in which they had seen Him go into heaven. The supposition that any other coming of Christ is referred to is altogether out of place, since no other personal coming again of Christ, except that which He had foretold to His disciples in the 14th chapter of St. John, is anywhere spoken of in the New Testament. The announcement here, like that He had Himself made in the 14th chapter of St. John, is plainly made to them to comfort them regarding His departure from them. He had intimated to them before (John xiv. 29) that He told them beforehand of His going to the Father, that when it had taken place they might believe; and now, when they actually saw Him going away into heaven, it was fitting that the promise of His coming again to them which He had before made should be impressed on them in the more distinct form in which it is here given. The promise, as it is here given, points plainly to what was contained in the former promise, that it is a coming again to them when they passed at death into the spiritual world—a coming again to receive them to Himself, that where He was there they might be also.

This is the original promise of Christ’s coming again to His disciples which He gave to them. What then

was the effect of this great promise upon the disciples, and upon the teaching which was addressed to the early Christian Church? We find that, after the Ascension, it produced a great effect upon them, and that, from the first, the coming again of Christ occupied a prominent place in the teaching of the Apostles. After the day of Pentecost, in the first teaching of the Apostles which is recorded to us afterwards, the discourse of Peter to the people after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, we read of Peter addressing the people as follows towards the end of his discourse to them. We translate the passage more distinctly, and with, at least we think, a more correct expression of what is meant than in either our Authorised or Revised Version: "Repent ye, therefore, and be changed, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of deliverance from trouble may come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Him who was before preached unto you, Jesus Christ: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God hath spoken of by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning" (Acts iii. 19-21). Here we find St. Peter already filled with the idea of Christ's coming again to them who believed in Him, to bring to them the foretold times of deliverance from trouble. Christ, to his apprehension, was now in heaven, and the heaven must receive Him until the times of restoration of all things, the final state of things with them, which God had spoken of by His prophets from the beginning. The passages in the Old Testament referred to are, we apprehend, such as those at the end of the 60th, and again of the 66th chapter of

Isaiah, which are evidently a description of the final state of things with the spiritual Israel, when the foretold kingdom of God should have come in its final glory.

When we turn again to the epistolary writings of the New Testament, we find that the coming or appearing of Christ to them from heaven is the great expectation in the future to which the Apostles taught the early disciples to look forward, and that it filled up to them all that they hoped for or looked forward to beyond their life here; it being at the same time implied that it was to come to them at death—that is, when their life here ended. It was to be to them the time of judgment; the time at which they were to put on the body of glory, and the time at which they were to enter into heaven—that is, into the final condition of their life, the final blessedness, the inheritance of life to which they looked forward. The prospect of it is constantly kept before the minds of the disciples as an all-important Christian teaching. And the references to it, in the different aspects of it which we have specified, are, it would seem, perfectly plain.

The passages in which it is spoken of are so numerous, and at the same time so different in the aspects of it in which it is spoken of in them, that it is difficult to present them severally in any natural order. But it is desirable that the different aspects of it in which it is presented to us in the New Testament should be separately stated, that the teaching of the New Testament on the subject may be made clear to us.

In the first place, generally, it was the great expect-

tation in the future to which the early Christians were taught to look forward.

St. Peter, for instance, whose teaching we have already quoted, says in the first chapter of his first Epistle, speaking of the trial of their faith, which their life here brought to the Christians whom he addresses, that the "proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise, and glory, and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 7). And again, a little farther on in the same Epistle, he says, "Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 13). And in the same Epistle, in his address to the elders of the Church, he says, "And when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 4).

So also St. John says in his first Epistle, "And now, my little children, abide in Him; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John ii. 28). And again in the same Epistle he says, "Beloved, now are we children of God; and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

In the Epistles of St. Paul, again, we find the coming again, or the appearing of Christ to His disciples, presented constantly to the early Christians in the same aspect, as the great all-containing expectation for them in the future. Thus, in the earliest of

his Epistles, the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, written probably about the year 52—that is, not more than twenty years after the Crucifixion—he describes the conversion of the Thessalonians to Christianity by saying that “they had turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead” (1 Thess. i. 9). In the same Epistle he says again, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus at His coming?” [Gr. presence] (1 Thess. ii. 19). At another place in the Epistle he says, “To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” (1 Thess. iii. 13). And again, “And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, and soul, and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. v. 23). In all these passages, the coming again, or appearing, of Christ to them from heaven is the great expectation in the future to which the Thessalonian Christians are taught to look forward. In the second Epistle to the Thessalonians St. Paul says, to the same purpose as in our first quotation from the first Epistle, “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ” (2 Thess. iii. 5). In the Authorised Version the last clause is rendered, more intelligibly, and we think more correctly, “And into the patient waiting for Christ.”

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians he says of the disciples at Corinth, that they “come behind in

no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unreprouable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 7). Where "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" is plainly the day of the revelation of Him. So also in the second Epistle to the Corinthians he says, "As also ye did acknowledge us in part, that we are your glorying, even as ye also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus."

It has often been said (by those who refer the coming of Christ to His disciples to the end of the world, and suppose therefore the end of the world to be implied in it) that the later Epistles of St. Paul speak on this subject in quite different language from that of the earlier Epistles, and that the teaching of the earlier Epistles is quite departed from by him. For our own part, we do not see, in his later Epistles, the least appearance of any change in his view of the subject. His teaching in the later Epistles seems to us to be entirely the same as in the earlier ones. The teaching, however, will speak for itself. In the Epistle to the Philippians, written during his imprisonment at Rome, and therefore among his last written Epistles, he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). In the Epistle to the Colossians, which is of the same date, he says, to just the same purpose, "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, *to present you* holy, and without blemish, and unreprouable, *before Him*" (Col. i. 21). And again in the same passage, "Whom we proclaim, admonish-

ing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that *we may present every man perfect in Christ*" (Col. i. 28). In the Epistle to Titus, which is probably of a still later date—written, that is, after the imprisonment at Rome—he teaches the gospel of Christ in a general form by saying, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 11-13).

St. James has the same teaching, very distinctly and prominently, in his Epistle. To the Jewish Christians of the dispersion, to whom his Epistle is written, he says, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming (Gr. presence) of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming (Gr. presence) of the Lord is at hand" (James v. 7, 8). And again, in what immediately follows this, "Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors."

Then it is at the same time indicated that the coming again, or appearing, of Christ to them, which was thus the great expectation in the future to which they were taught to look forward, was to come to them at death: the expression which is used in some of these passages, the "revelation" or "manifestation" of Christ itself implies this. What is meant is plainly the revelation or manifestation of Him to them from heaven, where

He now is, when at death they go to the Father. It contains in it always a reference to the promise made to the disciples ere He left the earth, that He would come again to them, and receive them to Himself, that where He was, there they might be also: and the emphasis of the expression lies in this, that the coming again that was promised is a coming again specially to His disciples.

In some of the passages we have quoted it is clearly indicated, it would seem, that the time of His revelation or manifestation is when the life of the disciples here comes to an end. When, for instance, the Thessalonian and the Corinthian Christians are described as in their life "waiting for" the coming or the revelation of Christ; or when it is expressly said by St. James, by way of helping the Christians he addresses to be patient amidst the troubles of their life here, that the coming of the Lord is at hand. In the face of such language we cannot rationally doubt, it would seem, that the coming of Christ for which they waited, and which was at hand, was to come to them at death.

But there are other passages in St. Paul's writings in which it is still more expressly set forth that the coming again to them of Christ, to which the early Christians looked forward, was to take place at death. In a remarkable passage in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, this is, we apprehend, very distinctly and expressly taught; although another meaning, quite different from this, is often put into the passage. We translate one clause in the passage (the 16th verse) more literally and more intelligibly than it is given in the Revised Version, for the passage has evidently been rendered by the translators in that version, as in

the former one, with a foregone conclusion regarding its meaning.

“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven in the call, in the voice of the archangel, and in the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

What is said in this passage is said to comfort the Thessalonian Christians regarding their Christian friends that fell asleep, that died, that they might not sorrow like the heathen, who had no hope; and what is said is that those who are fallen asleep in Jesus, God will bring with Him—that is, when He is manifested. This is the hope regarding their Christian friends that are fallen asleep which they should have; and the reason he gives for this hope is simply that they that have fallen asleep are now with Christ: His appearing to us will be their appearing along with Him. He says to them, by the word of the Lord, that they who were alive, who were left unto the appearing of the Lord, should not precede (that is, should not come to the appearing of the Lord before) them that are fallen

asleep. For the Lord Himself should descend from heaven—that is, should appear—in the call hence itself, in the voice of the archangel, and in the trump of God; and the dead in Christ should rise out of death first—that is, before them that were now living. Then they that were alive, that were left, should together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so should they ever be with the Lord. It is plainly contained in this teaching that the dead in Christ have already risen out of death, and come to the appearing of the Lord; that they are now with Christ, and that Christ, with those who have gone before to Him, will appear to us whenever the call hence comes to us.

There is no real difficulty, it seems to us, in the teaching of this passage, except what is created by our own preconceived notions. The peculiarities in the language are found, many of them, in the language of St. Paul in the only other passage—the 15th chapter of first Corinthians—in which he speaks particularly of the resurrection of the dead. And although some of the expressions used are very obscure to us, the words are quite intelligible in themselves, although the meaning is not obvious to the reader. In reference to the expression, “God will bring with Him,” we may compare what is said in chap. iii. 13 of this Epistle, already quoted: “At the coming (Gr. presence) of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

When the call of a Christian into the after life is spoken of as “the voice of the archangel” and as “the trump of God,” the first of these expressions has its meaning, it would seem, in the fact that the ministry of angels is used in carrying the righteous to heaven;

as seems to be expressly taught by our Lord in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, when it is said of the latter, *when he died*, that he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." The second expression means simply, it would seem, that the call hence is a call of God. The expression is of course a figurative one. It seems to be taken from the method used in gathering the Jews to their solemn assemblies, which was by the sound of a trumpet. We may read this in Numb. x. 1-3, and the custom then established had its origin probably in what took place in the great scene at Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 16), where the people were summoned "to meet with God" in a supernatural way, with "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." In a similar form of figurative language, the call of the gospel, summoning men to the kingdom of God here, which was addressed to them by human messengers, is spoken of by Christ (Matt. xxiv. 31) as His sending "His angels with a loud-sounding trumpet" to gather His new "chosen people." What is said of them "that are alive, that are left," in the 17th verse, is very obscure to us, but the obscurity is in the nature of the subject. When it is said that they "shall, together with the dead, be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," we may suppose the meaning to be that they are carried up, as the dead have already been, simply in a way that is hidden from men here, and that the meeting with the Lord takes place outside of this world, in the spiritual world which is around the earth. With the Jewish language of this passage, in regard to the call of Christians into the after life, we may compare that of Christ Himself (in John v. 28), "The hour cometh in

which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice"—the voice of the Son of man—"and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment."

The supposition that this remarkable passage in first Thessalonians, of which we have been speaking, refers to something that is to take place at the end of this world is entirely gratuitous, and makes what is said without meaning to the Apostle's readers.

Beyond this remarkable passage, in which we are, it would seem, expressly taught that the dead in Christ have already, at the moment of their call hence, come to "the appearing" of Christ, and are now with Him, and that they will be brought again to us along with Christ, when we at our call hence come to His appearing, there are other passages in St. Paul's Epistles which plainly contain in them the teaching that the "coming again" of Christ to us takes place at death. Thus, in his first Epistle to Timothy, having before exhorted Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith," and so to "lay hold on eternal life," he adds, "I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession, that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power eternal. Amen" (1 Tim. vi. 13-16). This very solemn charge to Timothy to keep the commandment which goes before—

that is, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life, "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ"—contains in it surely, if it has any meaning at all, that the appearing of Christ was to take place to Timothy at the end of his life here—that is, to follow immediately when his life here ended. The words that follow, "which in its own times He—God—shall show," must needs, again, contain in them, it would seem, that the appearing of Christ is "shown," not at one time to all Christians, but to Christians individually at the proper times which God has chosen—that is, at the times which He has appointed to them respectively for their passing hence by death.

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, again, in like manner, speaking of the observance of the Lord's Supper, he says to the Corinthian Christians, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). Where, in the observance of the Lord's Supper, we are said to "proclaim the Lord's death"—that is, to set it forth as an event to be realised, and spiritually fed on by us—"till He come:" implying surely that the coming or appearing of Christ to us is to take place at the end of our life here.

We observe now, secondly, that the appearing of Christ, which was thus to the early Christians the great prospect they had in the future, and which was to take place to them at death, was also the time at which they were to put on the body of glory.

This great change in the condition of our existence is one of the many things in our future which, in our modern conception, are not expected to take place till "the end of the world." The early Church expected

it, it seems perfectly plain, as one expects a thing near to them, at the appearing of Christ to them individually at death. Thus, in the Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul says, "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 20). Where it is plainly said that the appearing of the Saviour to them from heaven was a thing they were presently waiting for; and it is clearly taught, surely, that the appearing of the Saviour to them from heaven was to bring to them the change of their present body for the body of glory.

In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, again, he says, "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For, indeed, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Now He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; (for we walk by faith, not by sight;) we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 1-8).

Here again, in the first part of the passage, as in 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, it is plainly taught that to put off this present body is for the Christian at the same time to put on the body of glory, and it is clearly implied, therefore, that the putting on of the body of glory takes place at death. And in the latter part of the passage it is distinctly taught again, that when we put on this body of glory we are at the same time with Christ. The building from God, a "house" not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, which we are said to have if our present body were dissolved, is set forth in this latter expression as the body naturally belonging to our spiritual condition when we have Christ's Spirit dwelling in us here. It is contrasted, in respect to its immortal character, with the "tabernacle" or tent, the temporary body, the "earthly house," in which we are at present.

To the same purpose we read in the Epistle to the Romans, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11)—that is, shall give life to, shall make immortal your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you. And so it is said in the same chapter, the 23rd verse, "Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here it would seem, as in the last quoted passage, it is implied that there is a body belonging naturally to our spiritual condition when the Spirit of God or of Christ dwells in us here which is put on at death; and for this redemption of our

body we here wait, looking forward for it to the time which comes after death.

To the same effect we read also in the Epistle to the Colossians, "When Christ who is our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

Then we are to observe, thirdly, that the appearing of Christ to which they looked forward was, to the early Christians, the time of judgment, or rather of the revelation on them of the judgment of God.

Thus St. Paul says in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (2 Cor. i. 4, 5). A similar passage, quoted with others, is found in the first Epistle of St. Peter, "That the proof of your faith being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It is plain from these and such like passages, that the revelation of the judgment of God on us takes place at death, at "the appearing" of Christ to us. The judgment itself, as we shall see set forth in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew, when we come to consider the discourse there, really takes place here: the revelation of it comes on our entrance into the life of hereafter. In the words of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Heb. ix. 27).

Finally, the appearing of Christ was, to the early

Christians, the time at which they were to enter into heaven.

To be with Christ was, in the conception of the early Christians, to be in heaven, where Christ now is, and to be in the final state of their life. And St. Paul, speaking for himself individually, in the Epistle to the Philippians plainly expects to be with Christ immediately upon his death: "But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ; for it is very far better" (Phil. i. 23); as he had said just before, in the 21st verse, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

In the second Epistle to Timothy, again, he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing." Here the first word, "henceforth," plainly means, it would seem, "after this life," or when the time of his departure, spoken of just before as at hand, had come. The day spoken of with emphasis as "that day" is plainly, moreover, the day of Christ's appearing to him; and the day of Christ's appearing to him is to St. Paul the time of his passing hence into the higher state of his life.

The teaching of St. Peter on the subject is, it would seem, distinct and express. In his first Epistle he says of Christians, "Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations (or trials), that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might

be found unto praise, and glory, and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 5). And again in the same Epistle he says to his readers, "But insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice, that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy" (1 Peter iv. 13).

The teaching of St. John on the subject is expressed in his first Epistle in the impressive saying, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, again, we have this very distinct teaching on the subject, "Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28).

The idea that the "appearing" of Christ spoken of in this 15th chapter of first Corinthians, and in the numerous other passages in the Epistles which we have quoted, is an event which is to take place at the end of the world, is an idea which has existed in the Church, it would seem, from a very early time. It has had its origin, it would seem, in a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of certain expressions in the New Testament. Mainly, perhaps, it has originated in a misinterpretation of an expression which occurs twice in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew, and of a similar expression in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew. At least these are the only passages in which anything taking place at the end of this world seems, in express words, to be spoken of in the New Testament.

The first of the two passages in the 13th chapter,

in which the expression referred to occurs, is in the interpretation of the parable of the tares in the field, where we read, as the words are rendered in our English (ver. 39), "The harvest is the end of the world;" and again (in the next verse) "So shall it be at the end of the world." Here we are to notice, first, that the thing spoken of in the passage is not the appearing of Christ, but the judgment which is to be in Christ's kingdom, or the revelation of that judgment. This is supposed by many to imply a personal coming of Christ to the earth. But in the parable here itself, as it is interpreted by Christ, the judgment, or rather the revelation of the judgment spoken of, is represented as taking place by the Son of man *sending His angels*, and *their* gathering out of His kingdom things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity. And then it is to be observed, secondly, that in the original the expression used, translated literally, is not "the end of the world," but "the end of the age." The word used is *αιων*, which means properly an age, or a period of time, not the material world or the system of outward things here. And the natural meaning of the expression, "the end of the age," here is certainly not the end of the material world, of which nothing is here spoken, but is, it seems to us, the end of the age or period of time that is now with us—that is, simply the end of life here. There are two passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, indeed (chap. i. 2, and chap. ii. 3), in which *αιων*, in the plural, is used, not for ages or periods in the world's subsistence, but, by a Hebraism, for simply "the worlds," because the thing spoken of is the creating or framing of the worlds; the reference in these passages being plainly

to the material structure of the worlds. Here, however, we have no reason to suppose that the word is used in any other than its proper and natural meaning. There is this special reason, moreover, for taking the word here in its natural meaning, that in a preceding verse of the interpretation of the parable (ver. 38), where it is said "the field is the world," the word which is translated "world" is *κοσμος*, the order of things here. That word, however, is not repeated here, as it naturally would have been if the sense intended here were the visible order of things, but the word used is changed into *αιων*. The "harvest" of the parable, it would seem, is plainly interpreted without any reference at all to the end of this world, as coming, in regard to us individually, at the end of life here, when our life here is manifested in its fruits. *Then*, as it is said, "the Son of man sends His angels, and they gather out of His kingdom the things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity: and *then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

The second of the two passages in the 13th chapter in which the expression occurs is in the interpretation of the parable of the net cast into the sea, where we read (ver. 49), "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous." The Revised Version here, and also in the first of the two passages, very properly gives as an alternative reading, "or, the consummation of the age"—that is, as already explained, at the end of life here. "*Then* the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous" (ver. 49).

These expressions, in the interpretation of the two

parables in regard to the angels, it is to be remarked, are entirely in accordance with what is said by our Lord in another parable (Luke xvi. 22), "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and that he was carried *by the angels* into Abraham's bosom." This is surely spoken of as taking place to Lazarus immediately upon his death.

In the passage in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew (ver. 3), the question put to our Lord by the disciples, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (or the consummation of the age), has reference plainly, we apprehend, to Christ's coming in His kingdom, and to the end of the existing Jewish age, and cannot possibly have reference to the end of this world, which Christ had not in any way spoken of.

There is, we apprehend, no passage in the New Testament in which "the appearing of Christ" is in any way connected with the end of this world.

The idea that the "appearing" of Christ is to take place at the end of this world, originating mainly perhaps in a misinterpretation of the expression of which we have spoken, has been helped also by the expression "the last day" (John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54), which is used by Christ repeatedly to denote the time at which He will raise up those who believe in Him out of death, and also to denote the time at which those to whom His word has been spoken will be judged. The expression, because of the prevalent notions about the end of the world, has been taken to mean "the last day" (John xii. 48) with regard to this world, although in the passages in which it occurs, nothing whatever is said about the world, and understood to

refer to the end of the world. But it means "the last day," we apprehend, simply with regard to our life here, and refers simply to the end to us of our life here. It is the beginning of the time that comes after death. An expression precisely equivalent, as we apprehend, is used by St. Peter in the 1st chapter of his first Epistle, when he speaks of Christians being "guarded, through faith, unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

The coming again of Christ to His disciples, of which we have been speaking, is, it seems to us, the only second coming of Christ, and the only personal coming of Christ, of which the New Testament anywhere speaks. It is not a coming again to the earth. Nor is it a coming to men in general. It is to take place to them that are Christ's in the future world, when they pass hence at death; and it forms, as we have seen, the great, all-containing expectation in the future to which the early Christians looked forward, and for which, in their life here, they waited.

When we turn to consider the coming of Christ in His kingdom, the first of the two comings of Christ which we have said are spoken of in the New Testament, an entirely different subject of contemplation is presented to us. It has no connection at all with the coming of Christ spoken of in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians, but it is a subject of great importance in itself, and it is important to separate the passages in the New Testament that refer to it from those which refer to that other coming. Christ's coming in His kingdom is largely foretold by Christ Himself in the Gospels.

We are to begin here by observing that Christ's preaching, from the beginning of His public ministry, just as that of His forerunner John the Baptist had been, was that the foretold kingdom of heaven was at hand. He went through all the synagogues of Galilee proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, which had been foretold of old by the prophets, was now at hand. On this preaching all His subsequent foretelling of the coming of His kingdom rests.

When He sent forth His twelve apostles, we find Him saying, in accordance with this, in the charge which He delivered to them, "When they persecute you in this city, flee into the next; for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come" (Matt. x. 23). This is plainly a reference to a coming of the Son of man which was already known to the disciples, and it could only mean, and be understood by them to mean, His coming in His kingdom—the kingdom which had been proclaimed to be at hand—this being the only coming of the Son of man of which the disciples at this time had the idea.

To the same purpose, that His coming in His kingdom was near at hand, we find Him saying, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 27, 28). It is obvious that the coming of Christ in His kingdom here—that is, the appearing of the foretold kingdom

of God—is spoken of in both these verses. In the latter verse, the coming of the Son of man spoken of is expressly His “coming in His kingdom”—that is, it is the appearance of the kingdom of God which He had foretold to be at hand; in other words, the appearance of Christ as a king reigning over men—the passing away of the Jewish age, to express it otherwise—and the coming in or the first beginnings of the Christian age which is now with us. There were some of them stood there, Christ says, who should live to see this; in other words, who should survive the destruction of Jerusalem and see the incoming of the Christian age. The parallel passage in St. Luke says simply of those present who are thus spoken of that they should not taste of death “till they see the kingdom of God” (Luke ix. 27). In the first of the two verses this coming of the Son of man in His kingdom is spoken of as His coming “in the glory of His Father with His angels,” and it is added that then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds. When it is said that the Son of man should come “in the glory of His Father with His angels,” the meaning is simply, we apprehend, that He should be seen or spiritually apprehended, reigning over men here in the glory of God and encompassed with the angels of God. This glory of Christ in His kingdom here is not a thing like the glory of an earthly king, which the eye of sense can see, but a thing which is visible to the eye of faith. Men coming to see Him thus is that in which the coming of His kingdom stood. When it is said again that then He should “render unto every man according to His deeds,” the meaning is that

this is what He should do in His kingdom, the judgment which should be in His kingdom, when it had thus come.

What is thus said is illustrated and placed in another light by what we read in another place, "Then answered Peter, and said unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what, then, shall we have? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 27). Where "the regeneration," in which the Son of man shall "sit on the throne of His glory," is simply, it is plain, the state of things which should be in His kingdom here when it had come. Then, as He sat on the throne of His glory judging men in His kingdom, the Apostles also should, under Him, sit on thrones judging in His kingdom—that is, they should be looked up to as under Him judging men in His kingdom. This is, it would seem, the natural and obvious meaning of the promise which is here made to the disciples; and it is plainly impossible to suppose, and is in no way contained in the words, that this judgment of men which is to be exercised by the Apostles has reference to something that is to be in the future world: it is plainly a thing that is to be in Christ's kingdom here.

We come now to Christ's great foretelling to His disciples of the coming of His kingdom in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, by far the fullest and the most important passage in His teaching on the subject. The discourse in the 24th chapter is com-

monly interpreted as having reference, in great part, to something that is to take place at the end of the world, but it has no appearance whatever in itself of being a discourse having reference to the end of the world. Except for an expression in the 3rd verse, which we have already spoken of as a mistranslation, it would not be so interpreted by any one who did not read it with a foregone conclusion regarding its meaning. The whole discourse of this and the following chapter, it is to be observed, is founded on a foretelling by Christ to His disciples of the approaching destruction of the Temple. The disciples came to Him as He was leaving the Temple courts, and called His attention to the magnificence of the Temple buildings; upon which He said to them, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." This foretelling of the coming utter destruction of the Temple, to the understanding of a Christian Jew of that day, and in Christ's intention plainly, was a foretelling of the passing away of the state of things that had hitherto existed in Judea, and of the coming of Christ's kingdom. It was so understood by the disciples who heard it. As He sat afterwards on the Mount of Olives, the disciples, we are told, came to Him privately and said, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (or, the consummation of the age).

The question has reference simply, it is plain, to the foretold destruction of the Temple. In their question, the destruction of the Temple, which He had foretold to the disciples, is identified with His coming,

as they express it—that is, with His coming in His kingdom—and with the end of the existing Jewish age. This understanding of their question is in the utmost degree natural and simple. Is it not absurd to suppose that they inquired at Him about “the end of the world,” in the ordinary sense of that expression. Christ had said nothing of the end of the world, but had spoken simply of the coming destruction of the Temple. The destruction of the Temple was naturally associated in their minds with the end of the existing Jewish age and the coming of His kingdom. But can any reason be given or imagined why it should be associated in their minds with the end of the world? Their question is simply, “When shall this destruction of the Temple be? and what shall be the sign—the forewarning—of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?”

We must keep in view the question asked, that we may understand our Lord’s answer. He begins by warning them to take heed not to be deceived about signs of the end, and telling them certain things which must precede it. “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and earthquakes, in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail. Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations

for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel (or these glad tidings) of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 4-14).

When it is said that the gospel of the kingdom should first be preached in the whole world, for a testimony unto all the nations, it is not implied that there should be a literally universal preaching of the gospel of the kingdom before the end spoken of came. What is foretold is simply what was a necessary preparation for the coming of Christ's kingdom. The Jews believed, and the disciples of Christ at this time had still the idea, that the foretold kingdom of God was for the Jews only. What is here said is simply that the gospel of the kingdom should first be preached in the whole world of the Roman Empire, for a testimony to all the nations. Without this the kingdom of God, in the form it was to take when it appeared, could not come. The glad tidings, rejected by the Jews, must first be preached to the nations—that is, to the Gentiles. When this had taken place the end should come.

Having thus introduced His answer to the question put to Him, He tells them now what should be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the existing Jewish age. "When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel

the prophet, standing in the holy place" ("let him that readeth," the Evangelist here says, "understand"), "then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains" (Matt. xxiv. 15, 16).

What "the abomination that maketh desolate" (see Daniel xii. 11), foretold by Daniel, which was to be set up when "the daily sacrifice shall be taken away," precisely was, was perhaps intelligible to the disciples, but is not to us clearly or certainly known. It was plainly, it would seem, some great desecration of the sanctuary of the Temple, since it is spoken of here as a thing that would be seen "standing in the holy place." It would at least be easily recognised when it appeared. The corresponding part of the discourse, as it is given in St. Luke, shows that when this desecration of the Temple was seen, another sign was to be given to them at the same time, "But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand" (Luke xxi. 20). When they should see this sign within the city, or that without it, then, in the language of St. Luke, they might know that the "desolation of Jerusalem" was at hand.

He goes on to tell them what they should do when the "sign" spoken of appeared: "Then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains: let him that is on the house-top not go down to take out the things that are in his house: and let him that is in the field not return to take his cloke. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a Sabbath: for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the

beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. xxiv. 16--23).

Thus far the meaning of the discourse is clear, and He has answered the disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the age?"

He proceeds to give them a warning, and to tell them in what way His kingdom should make its appearance. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or There; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, He is in the inner chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles (or vultures) be gathered together" (Matt. xxiv. 23--28).

False Christs and false prophets were to arise, doing great signs and wonders, but they were not to go forth to them, or to believe what was said of them; for not thus was He to appear. His coming in His kingdom was not to be a personal coming, so as to be visible to the eye of sense and confined to one spot; nor would they need any one to call their attention to it. The coming of His kingdom was to be like the appearing of the lightning; it would be visible in many different places at once, and it would *make itself* visible to men. He gives an explanation, under a figure, how it was

that His kingdom should appear in many different places at once. "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." The meaning seems to be simply, "Wheresoever the dead, corrupting, body of heathenism is, there that which is to be its destruction will come on it."

He sets forth to them now, in a positive form, how it was that His kingdom should come. "But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30).

The first part of this statement is expressed in metaphorical language, in the metaphorical language, it is to be noted, which was used by the Jewish prophets in speaking of the religions of the day, which was no doubt intelligible to those to whom it was here spoken. It is metaphorical language in which the objects in the literal heavens which are above us were spoken of in the way of metaphor, for the objects in, so to speak, the spiritual heavens—that is, for the objects which were looked up to and worshipped by the people spoken of. The sun, moon, and stars, here denote the objects which the heathen worshipped in the spiritual heavens; and when it is said that the sun should be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars fall from heaven, this expresses simply, in figurative language, the gradual decline and

fall of heathenism. That this is the meaning of the language used is expressed, it would seem, by our Lord Himself in the plain words of the last clause here, "And the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." That is, it would seem, the dominion over men of the existing powers of the heavens, the gods whom men worshipped and in whom they believed, should be shaken. This was to be the result of what was before set forth in figurative language. This explanation is given still more expressly in the corresponding passage in St. Luke, where the words we have just quoted are given as containing the cause of the religious changes, as well as of the troubles, of the time spoken of: "And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: *for* the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Luke xxi. 25, 26). St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 16), quoted a passage from the prophet Joel, in one verse (Acts ii. 20), of which the existing religious state of things among the Jews is spoken of in precisely the same metaphorical language used by our Lord here, and it is said, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord come, that great and notable day." And he interprets the prophecy as having now begun to be fulfilled in the events, then present with them, of the day of Pentecost; evidently recognising that the then existing state of things with the Jews was ere long to come to an end in darkness spiritually and in blood, as it did, in fact, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

We understand the passage in our Lord's discourse here to mean, "The heavenly things spiritually that are now with men (expressed here by the sun, moon, and stars) shall be darkened, cease to give light, fall from heaven;" that is, shall gradually fail to exert an influence upon men till their influence upon them ceases; the result being that the dominion of the existing powers of the heavens over men shall be shaken. This understanding of the passage is, it seems to us, that which Scripture itself suggests; and it is certainly in accordance with the historical facts in which, it would seem plain, the fulfilment of the prophecy is contained. It is, it seems to us, the only explanation of our Lord's prophecy here that is either natural or possible.

Dean Alford, who is at present perhaps the most widely read of the recent commentators on the Greek text of the New Testament, in support of his reference of this passage to the end of the world, tells us (vol. i. p. 224) that such prophecies in Scripture as that in the 29th verse ("The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven") are to be understood literally, that the physical signs really happen; and seems to expect that the things here foretold, in the literal meaning of the words used, will take place at the end of the world. In proof or illustration that such prophecies are to be literally understood, and the physical things spoken of really happen, he refers specifically to Joel ii. 31, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come;" and to Hag. ii. 6, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the

earth, and the sea, and the dry land," compared with Heb. xii. 26, "But now He hath promised, saying, Yet once I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." But is this explanation consistent with fact in regard to the passages referred to? Was "the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, or did the stars fall from heaven," in the literal meaning of the words, as prophesied in Joel ii. 31, when that prophecy was fulfilled, as it is quoted as being, Acts ii. 16, in the events of the first age? Or was not the fulfilment of the prophecy, on the other hand, contained in this, that the heavenly things spiritually that were with the Jews came to an end in darkness spiritually and in blood; the reference being to the overthrow of the Jewish state, and of their worship and ordinances in the destruction of Jerusalem? Did God, again, *literally* "shake the heavens," when the promise of Hag. ii. 6, as it is quoted and interpreted in Heb. xii. 26-28, was fulfilled? Haggai himself speaks of it (ii. 6, 7) as a promise which was to be fulfilled at the coming of Christ: "I will shake the heavens, &c., and the Desire of all nations shall come." Did the "physical sign" take place at that time? Or was not the fulfilment of the prophecy contained in this, as the Epistle to the Hebrews seems plainly to tell us, that the heavenly things spiritually that were with the Jews were shaken, in the sense of being removed, as explained in Heb. xii. 27, "that those things which are not shaken"—the "kingdom that cannot be shaken"—"may remain?"

Along with the decline and fall of heathenism which our Lord has thus set forth, He tells the disciples, in the second part of His statement, there should be at

the same time the appearing in its place of His kingdom. This is expressed in the same figurative language. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The Son of man, that is, should then appear in the spiritual heaven in the place of the powers in that heaven that were passing away. This should be the coming of His kingdom. The kingdom of Christ, in other words, should make itself visible to men. The mourning of all the tribes of the earth is the mourning of the heathen at the visible coming of Christ's kingdom, in the place of the heathenism that was passing away. Their mourning is when "they shall see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven"—that is, upon the clouds, or darkness, that had come to be in the spiritual heaven—"with great power and glory;" in the great power and glory, that is, of His kingdom. The expression, "upon (*ἐπι*) the clouds of heaven," is found also in Dan. vii. 13, 14, which contains an Old Testament prophecy of Christ's kingdom. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with—literally, 'upon'—the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

He sets forth, further, the after extension of His kingdom to all nations and peoples. "And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet

(or, with a trumpet of great sound), and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 31).

This is commonly interpreted with us to be a thing which Christ is to do "at the end of the world;" a gathering together of the *saved* in all nations which is then to take place; but there is nothing in the passage about the end of the world, and those who are gathered together are not said to be the saved. It has the appearance, in the language used, of being a gathering together of the saved at the end of the world. It is plainly a thing He was to do when, or after, He came in His kingdom; and the thing is that by His angels—that is, by His messengers, and with the call of the Gospel—He should then gather together His chosen people, those whom He called to His kingdom out of all nations. Under the old covenant the Jews were God's chosen people, and the point of what is said here is that now Christ should call His chosen people out of all nations, "from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Our Lord, finally, speaks a parable to the disciples, with the view plainly of teaching them how near His coming in His kingdom was. "Now from the fig-tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that He is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 32-35).

This, it would seem, is telling the disciples, in the

first place, that there was a natural connection, in the order of providence, between the events He had foretold to them, the passing away of the existing Jewish age and His coming in His kingdom, that the latter event would immediately succeed the former; and, secondly, to all common-sense it is saying in plain words that the existing generation—those who now lived—should not pass away till all these things were fulfilled—that is, till the Jewish age should pass away in the way He had foretold, and His kingdom should come.

To turn the words “this generation”—*ἡ γενεά αὐτή*—into the meaning of “this race,” in the sense of the Jews, as Alford does, by way of transferring the time spoken of to “the end of the world,” is surely the wildest interpretation of a simple expression, to bring it into unison with a preconceived theory, and the most reckless tampering, for this purpose, with our Lord’s very solemn words here. In every one of the examples which Alford adduces from the Septuagint and the New Testament, it seems plain to us the word refers to the existing generation, and not, as he asserts, to the race of the Jews. His rendering of the words used here is, we apprehend, an impossible one, and it takes away all meaning from them; for what note of time would there be in saying that the Jews should not pass away till all these things should be fulfilled? It is, moreover, in the plainest contradiction to the preceding sentence, as well as all the preceding context; for He had just said that *they*, the disciples to whom He spoke (ver. 33), should *see* all these things. It was natural surely to add to this solemnly, “Verily I say unto you, This generation

shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished."

He goes on to say, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. xxiv. 36).

The "day and hour" spoken of are, it would seem plain, the precise time of the destruction of the Temple and city of Jerusalem—that is, of the end of the Jewish age, that great catastrophe being identified with the coming of Christ's kingdom, which immediately thereafter, amidst the decline and fall of heathenism, was to begin to appear. The precise time at which that great event would take place was, He says, known to no one, not to the angels of heaven, nor even to Himself, but only to His Father. But, He proceeds to tell them, when it came it would come on them unexpectedly, as the flood came on men in the days of Noah.

"But as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left" (Matt. xxiv. 37-41). The suddenness and unexpectedness of the catastrophe which was to usher in the coming of His kingdom are thus graphically depicted to them.

He goes on to give them the exhortation which follows. "Watch therefore; for ye know not on what

day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. xxiv. 42-44). They were to "watch" for the great event of which He had foretold them—that is, to expect it, and to be at all times prepared for its coming. And this first, because they did not know the time of its coming; and secondly, because He had told them within what period it would come—that is, before some of those who were now living had passed away. It is not at first sight very obvious to us perhaps why their being prepared for the great catastrophe which was to usher in the kingdom of Christ should be a thing of such great importance for the disciples. But to Jewish disciples the catastrophe which was foretold them when it came would naturally be a great trial of their faith in God—greater than we, who look back on it as a thing of the past, can easily realise. It was important that the event should not come on them unexpectedly, that their faith in Christ should be sustained through the intervening troubles, and in that trial of them when it came. And everything, moreover, we are to realise in regard to the expected future of the kingdom of God here depended on their being steadfast through that trial of them when it came. It was on account, it would seem, of the greatness of the event to them that this whole discourse to them upon it was spoken.

He proceeds to teach in a parable what preparedness for this great event in the future meant for them whom He had appointed to be rulers in His kingdom. "Who

then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder" (or, severely scourge him), "and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxiv. 45-51).

Their preparedness for the great event foretold them meant their being occupied in the work He had assigned them—that of feeding His people spiritually—and their being found occupied in that work when He came.

We pass on now to the continuance of the discourse in the 25th chapter, in which, speaking another parable to them, in which He likens the Church at that time to ten virgins, who, at a marriage, had gone forth to meet the bridegroom, He sets forth, as it were, in a prophetic picture of it, the state of preparedness for His coming in which the Church should be when the great event took place which was to usher it in. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom!

Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward come also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. xxv. 1-13).

The state of things in the Church in regard to Christ's coming in His kingdom, at the time of the appearing of His kingdom, is here very graphically depicted. All should professedly be looking forward to His coming; the ten virgins took their lamps and all went forth to meet the bridegroom. Some of them should be ready for it, and some unprepared; five of the virgins were foolish, and five were wise. But none should be really expecting it when it took place; while the bridegroom tarried—that is, simply did not come—the virgins all slumbered and slept. When the event which was to usher in His coming took place, those who were ready for it should enter into His kingdom; those who were unprepared for it should be unable to enter into it.

He concludes the impressive picture of the parable with the same lesson as before, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

In the next passage of the discourse our Lord teaches the disciples that He had given them gifts and oppor-

tunities suitable to each of them severally for living the life to which He had called them, and that, when He came in His kingdom, He would call them to an account of the use they had made of these, and would deal with them accordingly.

“For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants (or, bond-servants) and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid, and

went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo: thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxv. 14-30).

What is taught in the parable is, it would seem, that His disciples, during His absence from them, had gifts and opportunities given them suitable for each of them severally for living the life to which He had called them; and that they would use or not use the "talents" thus intrusted to them. And that when He came in His kingdom, those who had used the talents intrusted to them in His service would have attained thereby to a fitness for serving Him in His kingdom; while those who had proved unfaithful in His service would lose the opportunity of preparation given to them, and would be unable to enter into His kingdom. The unprofitable servant would be cast into the outer darkness. There, there should be only sorrow and despair.

Our Lord concludes the discourse by setting forth to them what He should do in His kingdom when it came, and during its continuance. "But when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels

with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory : and before Him shall be gathered all the nations ; and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats ; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee ? or athirst, and gave Thee drink ? And when saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in ? or naked, and clothed Thee ? And when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee ? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye

did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life."

The Son of man "coming in His glory, with all the angels with Him," is simply the Son of man coming in His kingdom. We may compare with the language here the similar language, already quoted, which Christ uses in Matt. xvi. 27, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds;" and His saying, in the following verse there, that some of those standing there should see the Son of man coming thus in His kingdom. His "sitting on the throne of His glory" again is simply, as appears from what follows, His sitting as a Judge in His kingdom, when it should have come. When He thus came in His kingdom, before Him should be gathered "all the nations;" and what He should do in His kingdom, His proper business in His kingdom, was to separate men, one from another. Those whom He approved, whom He set "on His right hand," should inherit the kingdom "prepared for them from the foundation of the world." The reason of this judgment, set forth in the figurative language of the parable, is that they lived in rightness of spirit towards their fellow-men around them, and therefore lived to Him. Those whom He did not approve, whom He set "on His left hand," should depart from Him into a state of suffering, "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The reason of this judgment, given in the same figurative language, is that they had not lived in rightness of spirit towards their fellow-men, and therefore had not lived to Him. The picture of

His kingdom is concluded in the words, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The separation of men as righteous and unrighteous is spoken of, in this concluding passage of our Lord's discourse, as that which Christ does in His kingdom, the proper business of His kingdom, when it came; and in any natural interpretation of the passage it is spoken of as a judgment, or separation from one another, of men which takes place in this life. It is the business of Christ, as King, in His kingdom, thus to judge men, or separate them one from another. The revelation, or carrying out of the judgment—when the King speaks as the Judge to those whom He had set on His right hand and on His left respectively—takes place in the end or issue of His kingdom here to each of us—that is, takes place to each of us at death, when He admits the righteous into the glory of the kingdom, and casts the unrighteous away from Him into spiritual destruction. This seems to us not only the natural interpretation of the passage, but the only possible interpretation of it, in the connection in which it stands with the preceding discourse.

This interpretation is in accordance, it may be observed here, with the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's kingdom, in which His acting as the Judge of men is spoken of as the thing which He should do in His kingdom; this being in ancient times, in a special sense, the proper office of a king. Thus, in Isaiah xi. 2, we read, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him . . . and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither

reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." And again, in Psalm lxxii. 1, 2, "Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment."

And it is in accordance, it may be added, with what we should naturally expect. For there must needs be this spiritual separation of men going on now, through their life of faith or of unbelief in Christ here, under the kingdom of God which is over us, and therefore in the King's judgment of us, that there may be an actual separation of them on account of spiritual character hereafter.

This concludes our Lord's great discourse to His disciples on the subject of His coming in His kingdom.

Subsequent to this great discourse on the subject, our Lord speaks on two occasions in the Gospels of His coming in His kingdom.

In the high priest's palace, in answer to the question of the high priest whether He were the Christ or no, He said to the high priest, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). This is the same language, it is to be observed, which He had used in one passage of the great discourse to the disciples on the subject of His coming in His kingdom: "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30).

And again, after His resurrection, He said to Peter, speaking in regard to John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." This, in any natural meaning of the words, plainly implies, we apprehend, that the coming of Christ spoken of was a thing known to Peter, and was a thing so near that John might live till it took place, if it does not intimate that he would do so. As a matter of fact, we know that St. John did live until after the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming in of the Christian age. The words here used are to be read along with those, already quoted, in Matt. x. 23, "When they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come;" and those also quoted before in Matt. xvi. 28, where Christ speaks of some standing there "which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom."

We shall speak now of the references to Christ's coming in His kingdom which are found in the Epistles of the New Testament.

Our Lord had clearly indicated to His disciples in His great discourse to them on the subject that the end of the existing Jewish age and His coming in His kingdom were approaching. He had told them what should be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age, and had told them that all these things, as they are set forth in His discourse, should be fulfilled before that generation passed away. The destruction of Jerusalem, however, did not take place until nearly forty years after the Crucifixion. And all the Epistles of the New Testament, it would seem, were written

during the intervening period. It is natural therefore to expect that there should be references in these Epistles to this great revolution of things which had been foretold to the disciples, and also to the language of the great discourse in which specially it had been foretold to them. The coming of Christ's kingdom was the great earthly hope set before the Church.

It is not indeed to be expected that the Apostles should say much beforehand to their disciples of the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish worship and ordinances. Nor that they should speak explicitly of the coming overthrow of heathenism. These were events in the future, as they had been foretold to the Apostles, too great to be openly spoken of to men beforehand, or to be much spoken of even in the figurative language in which the promise had been given to the Apostles. Yet some allusions to the great coming revolution of things spiritually which had been foretold are naturally to be expected. It is naturally to be expected also that the events spoken of in Christ's great discourse, which were to intervene before the end of the Jewish age and the coming of Christ's kingdom, should be in some way referred to; and these expectations are abundantly fulfilled by the Epistles, in which the references to the great coming revolution spiritually, and to the events connected with it, are sufficiently numerous and explicit to show that the expectation of what had been foretold was confidently entertained, that our Lord's great discourse had made a deep impression on the Church, and that the Church was sustained by the things spoken of in it.

The references to the great prospects before the

Church occur in perhaps the most distinct form, as well as most fully, in the Epistles of St. Paul. We shall speak, therefore, first of what St. Paul says on the subject. In the earliest of his Epistles, the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, the references to it are especially distinct. There is, in the first place, an allusion to it, it would seem, in what he says of the Jews in the 2nd chapter of the first Epistle: "For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus; for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; to fill up their sin alway: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. ii. 14-16). The last words here (*εἰς τέλος*) are, literally, it would seem, "unto the end." The translation given in both our versions takes away, it seems to us, its special meaning. In the original, we apprehend, the meaning is plainly, "but the wrath is come upon them unto the end"—that is, in preparation for the end. In this there would seem to be a reference plainly to the approaching foretold destruction of Jerusalem and overthrow of the Jewish state.

In the 5th chapter of the first Epistle there is a more distinct and a fuller reference to the same coming event: "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman

with child; and they shall in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 1-6).

"The day of the Lord" here spoken of is plainly, we apprehend, the day of the destruction of Jerusalem and of His coming in His kingdom. The disciples at Thessalonica are told that they "knew perfectly" that that day was coming, and would "come as a thief in the night." How did the disciples know this? The only possible answer, we apprehend, is that they knew it from our Lord's great discourse to His disciples, which we have in the 24th and following chapter of St. Matthew, in which the suddenness and unexpectedness of His coming and of the end of the Jewish age are in many ways expressed, and in which this very figure of the coming of a thief in the night is used to illustrate His meaning. "Watch, therefore," He had there said; "for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch" (that is, within what period of time) "the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. xxiv. 42-44). The exhortation given here, "So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober," is just the exhortation which our Lord had given there (Matt. xxiv. 42), "Watch, therefore; for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh."

At the beginning of the second Epistle we have a distinct setting forth of the prospect of Christ's kingdom which the Church at this time had. The time at which the second Epistle was written was, it would seem, about the year 53, that is, nearly twenty years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

"We ourselves glory in you," the Apostle says, "in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted, rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling" (2 Thess. i. 4-11).

In the first part of this passage, in which we read, "To the end ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer," the disciples at Thessalonica are plainly spoken of as looking forward to the coming or appearing of the kingdom of God, and suffering now, in their Christian life here, that they might enter into it. The language used here,

“at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire,” as denoting the appearing of the kingdom of God, is plainly taken, again, from our Lord’s language in His great discourse to the disciples (Matt. xxv. 31), “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory;” and from similar language of our Lord in Matt. xvi. 27, “The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds;” and in Matt. xxiv. 30, “The powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” And the prospect of destruction coming on their persecutors, and of rest for them, which the Apostle here sets before the Thessalonians, is plainly the prospect of “the day of the Lord” spoken of in the first Epistle, in which Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed, which was to bring in, or rather, as is here implied, which was to be, Christ’s coming in His kingdom. In that day of the Lord God would “take vengeance” on the people of Israel, who did not know Him, and did not obey the Gospel of His Son; and they should be punished by suffering eternal destruction from God’s kingdom here. In that day also Christ should come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed in that day. The Apostle adds naturally, “To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling.”

In the passage which follows, in the 2nd chapter, the Apostle enters more fully into the subject of what

lay before them, and tells of certain things that were to precede Christ's coming in His kingdom; the passage being occasioned by a misconception on the subject into which the Thessalonians had fallen.

What had been said in the first Epistle of the day of the Lord coming on them as a thief in the night, and the destruction it was to bring with it, coming suddenly, as travail upon a woman with child, had led the Thessalonians to think, it would seem, that Christ's coming was to be looked for day by day, and that therefore greatly discomposed their minds and unsettled them. With regard to this misconception of theirs, he says, "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming (Gr. presence); even he, whose

coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 1-12).

In the first part of this passage, two things are spoken of which must take place before Christ's coming and the end of the age. The first is spoken of as "the falling away." "It will not be," the Apostle says, "except the falling away come first." The expression refers plainly, we apprehend, to the falling away among the disciples on account of the afflictions and persecutions they should be called to endure, which our Lord had foretold in His great discourse to the disciples on the subject of His coming in His kingdom, when He said, "And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another: and many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 10-13). The falling away thus distinctly pictured and foretold to them had not yet come, and therefore the end was not yet.

A second thing, which was to come after the falling away, and to precede Christ's coming, is spoken of here, when it is added, "And the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or is

worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God."

On this remarkable passage the most fantastic interpretations have in recent times been put. We think it plain that it is a reference, although to us obscurely expressed, to "the abomination of desolation," spoken of in our Lord's discourse (Matt. xxiv. 15), which was to be seen standing in the holy place, and to be the sign of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. It is to be observed, in support of this interpretation, that it must needs be something that was to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish age. And again, that it is implied in the chapter of this Epistle which we are considering, that although these two things, the falling away among the disciples and the revelation, as it is here expressed, of the man of sin, must take place before the day of the Lord, yet the Thessalonian disciples might live to see the day of the Lord which lay beyond them. The revelation of "the man of sin" was still in the future. The expression is, in our day, understood to indicate a person. But it is rather, we think, to be taken figuratively, and to be understood as an impersonation simply of what is called "the abomination of desolation." What "the abomination of desolation" was we do not know, there is no historical record of it. It was, it would seem, an idol of some sort, which the desolater of Jerusalem set up in the holy place—that is, in the temple. It is here personified, it seems to us, as being the outcome and the most wicked manifestation of the idol-worship of the heathen, and spoken of as "the man of sin, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called

God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." The Apostle bids them remember that when he was yet with them he told them these things.

"And now," he says, "ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season." "For," he adds, "the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming" (Gr. presence). This wicked outcome of the idol-worship of the heathen, the Lord should "slay with the breath of His mouth," that is, with the Word of God, which He spake to men, and should "bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming," that is, by the presence of His kingdom among men.

Our understanding of the passage is confirmed by the account of the origin of the appearing of the "man of sin," to which is immediately added, "Whose coming (or rather, whose appearing) is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." This is precisely the account of the origin of the idol-worship of the heathen which this same Apostle gives in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. They held down the truth,

he says, in unrighteousness. There had been a revelation of God made to them ever since the creation of the world; but, knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God, but became vain in their reasonings. God therefore, as it is here said, "sent them a working of error, that they should believe a lie." "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. i. 23).

We hold it to be plain, in these Epistles to the Thesalonians, that St. Paul had read the Gospel of St. Matthew, and was familiar with Christ's great discourse to His disciples in the 24th and 25th chapters regarding His coming in His kingdom.

We pass now to a much later stage in St. Paul's ministry. St. Paul lived till the time of the foretold falling away had come, till at least that great declension had begun to appear; and in his two pastoral Epistles to Timothy, written probably at the very end of his course, about the year 67 or 68, he speaks of it very expressly as a thing which had been foretold, and also of Christ's approaching coming to judge men in His kingdom.

In his first Epistle he says, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded (or, seared) in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. iv. 1-4).

This is plainly written during the foretold falling away, or after it had commenced, when it could, therefore, be described from experience.

And again, in his second Epistle he says, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away. For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And like as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. iii. 1-8).

This also is plainly written at the time of "the falling away," and described from experience.

In the same Epistle, a little farther on, he says, "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine (or, the healthful teaching); but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an

evangelist, fulfil thy ministry. For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day, and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 1-8).

Here the two comings of Christ, of which we have been speaking in this Appendix, are conjoined as the ground of the charge which St. Paul addresses to Timothy. He charges him "by His appearing and His kingdom;" the appearing referred to, it would seem from what comes after, being His appearing to His disciples at death, and the idea being added of His kingdom as a thing that was now near at hand. In the latter part of the passage, His appearing to His disciples at death is the only coming spoken of; that appearing, here as everywhere in the New Testament, being the great motive held forth to diligence in all Christian duty. "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing."

We turn now to what St. Peter says on the subject. St. Peter was one of the four disciples to whom our Lord's great discourse, in Matthew 24th and 25th, regarding His coming in His kingdom, was spoken. It is only in his second Epistle that St. Peter speaks on the subject. That Epistle would seem to have been written in the year 67 or 68, about the same time as St. Paul's two Epistles to Timothy, and, as

we shall afterwards see, as the Epistle of St. Jude. There are two passages in the Epistle which it especially concerns us to quote. The first is in the 2nd chapter. "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies (or, sects of destruction), denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings, by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you . . . but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement, and despise dominion . . . men that count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, spots and blemishes, revelling in their love-feasts while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unsteadfast souls, having a heart exercised in covetousness, children of cursing, forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing. . . . These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bond-servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter ii. 1-21).

In the parts of this passage which we have quoted, taken by themselves, there is the description of a great falling away among the disciples, a falling away of the most portentous character, which, beginning in the denial of Christ's divine character, exhibited itself in the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, while they retained a religious name, and in the most unbridled licentiousness. At the time the Epistle was written this falling away was beginning to appear, and was to be more fully developed afterwards.

In the parts of the passage which we have omitted, and which we now proceed to quote, it is plain that the writer was looking forward to a great judgment of destruction which this falling away and the gross licentiousness in which it expressed itself was about to bring upon men, and which was very near at hand; to a judgment of destruction like that which came on the angels that sinned, like that which came on the world before the flood, like that which came on Sodom and Gomorrah.

The parts of the passage omitted are as follows:—
"Whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not. For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher

of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and of Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds): the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment. . . . Daring, self-willed, they tremble not to rail at dignities: whereas angels, though greater in might and power, bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord. But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying (or, corruption) surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing. . . . But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet."

It is plain that these last-quoted parts of the passage are spoken not only to forewarn the unrighteous of the judgment that was coming on them, but also to sustain the faithful in the great trial of their steadfastness that lay before them.

The second passage in the Epistle which we are to consider immediately follows that with which we have been occupied, and is, it seems plain to us, on the same subject, the great catastrophe which was then impending. Only another aspect of the subject is here presented to the readers of the Epistle, and the coming

catastrophe is exhibited as the passing away of the Jewish age, and the coming, in its place, of the kingdom of God. The passage is addressed to those who did not believe in the great change which was at hand. "This is now, beloved, the second Epistle that I write unto you; in both which I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance, that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your Apostles: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements (or, heavenly bodies) shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up (or, as in the most ancient

MSS. discovered). Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements (or, heavenly bodies) shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight" (2 Peter iii. 1-14).

In the first part of this passage St. Peter tells his readers that, in both his Epistles to them, he sought to stir up their minds to remember the words spoken of old by the prophets regarding the kingdom of God that was to come in the end, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour to them through their Apostles. The former of these expressions refers, we apprehend, to the words of the prophets, in which they foretold the kingdom of God that was to appear in the future; to such words, for instance, as those of Isaiah, "For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. lxx. 17). And again, "The new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me" (Isa. lxvi. 22). The latter expression again refers plainly to the repeated exhortations of our Lord to his disciples in His great discourse to the four Apostles in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, to watch and to be in a state of preparedness for His appearing in His kingdom; as not knowing when the great judgment by which His appearing was

to be ushered in would be, but knowing that it would come suddenly and unexpectedly, when men looked not for it. The reason why St. Peter called these things to their remembrance was that there were certain persons among them, as it had been foretold there would be, who, walking after their own lusts, mocked at what had been thus foretold them. They said, "Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"—that is to say, the state of things spiritually with men continued to be what it had been, and there was no appearance of that entirely new state of things spiritually with men which the appearing of Christ in His kingdom was to bring in. The answer of the Apostle is, that those who thus spoke wilfully forgot the past history of the world. There were heavens (that is, heavens spiritually) from of old, and an earth compacted out of water, by the word, by the will, of God. By that word or will the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. By the same word the heavens (spiritually) that now were, and the earth, were "stored up for fire," "being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." But this one thing they were not to forget, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"—that is, the Lord could as easily accomplish His purpose, in the passing away of the Jewish age, in one day as in a thousand years. The Lord was not slack concerning His promise, as some reckoned slackness, but was long-suffering towards them, as not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord would come as a

thief, unexpectedly, in which the heavens (spiritually) should pass away with a great noise—with a crash—and the heavenly bodies be “dissolved with fervent heat,” and the earth (that now was) and the works that were therein should be “burnt up.” Seeing that these things were thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought they to be in all holy living and godliness, “looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God,” in which the heavens spiritually that now were, and the elements of which they were composed, should be dissolved? “But,” he adds, “according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”—that is, they looked for the new state of things that was to be under the promised kingdom of God. “Wherefore,” he says finally, seeing that they looked for these things, “give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless in His sight.”

The idea that all this refers to what is to take place at the end of this world, and is a prophecy of the destruction of the outward world here, is, it seems to us, altogether absurd, there not being a single clause in the passage that, rationally interpreted, has any appearance of having such a reference. The last sentence of itself clearly implies that the great catastrophe spoken of was to take place in their own day; and the exhortation it contains is simply a repetition of our Lord's often-given exhortation to His disciples to watch for, and be prepared for, His coming in His kingdom.

The brief Epistle of St. Jude is wholly occupied with the falling away that was to precede the coming

of Christ in His kingdom, and, like the second Epistle of St. Peter, would seem to have been written amidst that falling away. It does not speak expressly of the coming of Christ in His kingdom, but there is, it would seem, a tacit reference throughout the Epistle to the judgment which was to open the way to that, as a thing near at hand. St. Jude says, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, how that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not. And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when, contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what

they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed (or, corrupted). Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are hidden rocks (or, spots) in your love-feasts, when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever. And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage. But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who make separations sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have mercy who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out

of the fire ; and on some have mercy with fear ; hating even the garment spotted with the flesh.

“ Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time, and now, and for ever more. Amen.”

There is in all this passage a resemblance which strikes every reader to the first passage we have quoted from the second Epistle of St. Peter. They are both evidently a description of the falling away that was to precede Christ's coming in His kingdom, and a description of it by writers who had witnessed it, and wrote in the midst of it. St. Jude describes himself as “ the brother of James,” that is, it would seem, of James the brother of our Lord, and the well-known Bishop of Jerusalem. Which of the two descriptions, that of St. Peter or this of St. Jude, was the first written, it is perhaps impossible to determine. On the whole, it seems to us probable that this of St. Jude was written first. But there can, we think, be no doubt that they are descriptions of the same thing, and that they were both written during the great falling away which they describe.

We find references, again, to the falling away of these last days in the first Epistle of St. John, who, like Peter, was one of the four disciples to whom the great discourse of the 24th of St. Matthew was addressed.

It is supposed by some that the first Epistle of St. John was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. There is nothing in the Epistle itself to suggest this,

or to make it probable. But Irenæus says that the Gospel of John was written at Ephesus. The Epistle, they very properly think, must have been written after the Gospel; and St. John, they argue, could not have gone to reside at Ephesus until after the death of St. Paul, which cannot be put later than the year 68. If he had, St. Paul would have made some mention of him in his second Epistle to Timothy, which was written to Timothy at Ephesus about the year 67.

On this very slender and doubtful foundation it is concluded that both the Gospel and the Epistle must have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem. But admitting that St. John could hardly have taken up his residence at Ephesus at the time the second Epistle to Timothy was written, for the reason given, we do not see any impossibility in supposing that he may have done so before the death of St. Paul, and specially before the destruction of Jerusalem. Both the Gospel and the Epistle, we think, bear internal evidence of having been written before that event; and we hold that there is internal evidence in the Epistle, in the passage which we are about to quote, that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The passage we quote, as referring to the falling away foretold by our Lord, is as follows:—"Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest how that they all are not of us. And ye

have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it. And because no lie is of the truth, who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the anti-christ, even he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also" (1 John ii. 18-23).

When the Apostle says, regarding the time at which he is writing, "It is the last hour," he must needs be speaking of it as the time spoken of in St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy (iii. 1), as "the last days"—that is, as the last hour, so to speak, of the Jewish age, the period spoken of in our Lord's discourse in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew. The other interpretations which have been given to the expression, "the last period of the world," and "the last dispensation," meaning the Christian dispensation, are manifestly inapplicable. Christ was not speaking, we must hold, of the last period or the end of the world in the discourse in the 24th of St. Matthew; and the end of the world, to all common-sense, had not come, and was not approaching at the time this Epistle was written. It has not yet come. The "Christian dispensation," again, in the sense of Christ's kingdom, was not yet come, but was only near at hand. The expression itself, used by St. John, who was one of the four disciples to whom the discourse of 24th Matthew was spoken, can only mean the last period of the Jewish age, spoken of in that discourse. What is said in the passage, we hold, is simply that the falling away foretold in that great discourse had now come.

When St. John says further, "Ye have heard that Antichrist cometh," he means simply, we apprehend, "that an opponent of Christ cometh." He does not refer, that is, to some great individual opponent of Christ who had been foretold, as the expression is with us commonly interpreted. No such individual opponent of Christ was foretold in Christ's discourse, or anywhere else; and the disciples here addressed, it seems plain to us, could have no knowledge of the last period of the Jewish dispensation beyond what was contained in that discourse. He refers simply to what Christ had said in that discourse, "And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another; and many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray" (Matt. xxiv. 10). Opposition to Christ was to be manifested in certain false teachers who were to arise among them, and to lead many astray. What the Apostle says here, we apprehend, is simply that this prophecy was now fulfilled in that there were now many opponents of Christ risen up among them who denied the fundamental Christian teaching that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Son of God. The false prophets who had been foretold were now with them, and by this, he says, they knew that it was the last hour. They had gone out from them, he adds—that is, they had arisen in the Church—but they were not of them. They were not of the faith on which the Church was founded. For if they had been of them, they would have continued with them; but they went out from them, that they might be made manifest how that they all were not of them. He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ, he adds, this is the Antichrist—the opponent of

Christ—even he that denieth the Father and the Son. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.”

We speak now of what is contained on the subject in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is of uncertain authorship, and, as in the case of all the other Epistles, the exact date of the writing of it is not certainly known. It seems plainly to have been written, however, just before the destruction of Jerusalem; certainly also at a time when the Jewish Christians, to whom it is addressed, were in great danger of falling away from the faith, and probably during the great falling away among the early Christians of which we have repeatedly spoken. There are repeated references in the Epistle, as it is natural there should be, to the great prospect of the coming of Christ's kingdom which was immediately before the Church; and that prospect is put in the prominent place which in the circumstances naturally belonged to it.

We shall make only two quotations from this great Epistle. In the 10th chapter the writer says, “Cast not away, therefore, your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. But my righteous one (or, the righteous one) shall live by faith: and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him” (Heb. x. 35–38). And in the 12th chapter, in the carrying out of the same practical address, the writer says, bringing in an Old Testament promise of the

coming of Christ's kingdom, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape, who turn away from Him that warneth from heaven (or, that is from heaven): but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence (or, godly fear) and awe: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 25-29).

In both these passages the near approach of the kingdom of Christ is very clearly indicated.

We have now considered the references to the foretold coming of Christ in His kingdom in the Epistles of the New Testament, which were all written, it would seem, within the forty years that elapsed betwixt the Crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem. We may conclude our review of these references to the great coming event by saying that some little light on the subject is, we think, to be gathered from the Book of the Revelation. The book of "The Revelation of St. John the Divine" was written by St. John, according to the uniform testimony of antiquity, after the persecution under Diocletian—that is, about the year 98, or towards the close of the first century. If this be so, it was written after the foretold kingdom of God had begun to appear in different countries and in various places, but while there was still room, in regard to it,

for the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." It was written, as appears in the first chapter of the book itself, during a season of persecution, or at least when the Church was everywhere exposed to great trials; and the revelation it contains of "the things which must shortly come to pass" was given, it seems plain, to sustain the Church under the trials it was at the time called to endure. The realisation of this seems to us to be the only proper key to the interpretation of the book.

We do not attempt, or even suggest, any particular interpretation of the symbols employed in the book, or of the visions vouchsafed to the Evangelist, in which, under these symbols, Christ shows His servants the things which were to come to pass. It seems to us that no satisfactory detailed interpretation of the book has ever yet been set forth to modern readers, whatever understanding of it there may have been in the minds of those for whom immediately it was written; and there is at least very much in it that is quite unintelligible to the Church of our day. But this much, we think, may be said, that it is written with a continual reference to the coming of Christ's kingdom in a fuller form than that in which it as yet appeared, and that the approaching triumph of this kingdom is the great consolation which, in the book, is held forth to the Church.

We do not attempt to show this from the book itself, as that would take us entirely beyond our present object, and perhaps, if we did make this attempt, we should not be able to show it clearly, or even satisfactorily, from our very imperfect understanding of the book. But we think it sufficiently appears from the

references to this coming of Christ's kingdom at the beginning, and again at the end of the book.

In the first chapter, in the salutation with which St. John begins the book, we find him saying, "Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him. Even so, Amen" (ver. 7). Which is just a repetition plainly of what St. John, who here speaks, had heard Christ say in His great discourse to His disciples: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30).

And again in the last chapter, the 22nd, we have the statement, three or four times repeated, that He was coming quickly. At the 7th verse we read, "And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." At the 10th verse we read, "And He saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." And again, at the 12th verse, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is." And in the very last sentence of the book we read, "He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: Come, Lord Jesus" (ver. 20). The object of His coming, as it is stated in the 12th verse here, "And my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is," is precisely what Christ had said in a foretelling of His kingdom already quoted, that in Matthew xvi. 27, 28. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels;

and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom."

The coming of Christ in His kingdom is a thing which now belongs to the past. The passages regarding it in the New Testament, which we have considered at length, it is important for us to consider. But it is simply that we may understand them aright, and therefore may not look on them, as is often done, either as things without meaning, or as things the fulfilment of which is still in a far distant future. They have all long ago been fulfilled, and they have now no importance to us at all, except for the interest which naturally attaches to the subject on which they are spoken. The coming of Christ to those who are His at death, of which we first spoke, is the only coming of Christ which concerns us. It is the only second coming of Christ for us, and it is the only personal coming again of Christ of which the New Testament anywhere speaks.

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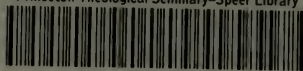




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